



**Testimony to Committee on the Environment, Natural Resources & Agriculture
in support of H447, “An Act reducing packaging waste in the Commonwealth”
11/9/2017**

The recycling industry and the municipal recycling programs that depend on it are being rocked by a sudden loss of the Chinese market. Costs to process single stream recycling are approaching that of disposal.

This is due in large part to new types of packaging, misleading labeling, and the resultant confusion by the public about what is actually recyclable. Baled recyclables contain what is now considered by China to be an unacceptable amount of nonrecyclable contamination, including soft plastics (i.e. plastic bags, overwrap, Styrofoam™), plastic coated cups and lids, and multimaterial packaging.

The managers who handle the trash and recycling for our fifteen member towns would welcome the sharing of responsibility for proper end-of-life management of packaging waste to the companies that manufacture and sell them.

Packaging waste comprised about 30% by weight of the total waste stream in 2010. Due to “lightweighting”, that number is likely lower now, but the problems associated with the new materials in the recycling stream have grown, causing reduced value of baled recyclable commodities, and sharply increased processing costs. In addition, comprehensive waste composition studies in 2013 revealed that 20% of our disposed trash consists of basic recyclables (clean paper, cardboard, glass bottles and jars, metal cans, and rigid plastic containers).

Bringing the packaging producers into the loop of the end of life management of their products through the provisions of H447 would reduce recycling and disposal costs to municipalities, and increase the recovery of valuable materials the following ways:

- Provide incentives to incorporate recyclability and sustainability into packaging design and decisions
- Provide funding for equipment upgrades for recycling processors to better manage new forms of packaging
- Provide end markets for recycled materials by incentivizing its use in packaging
- Fund education for the public so they know what should go in the trash, and what

should go in the recycling.

Our member towns will spend over **\$7 million** this year, not including collection and transportation, to properly manage about **90,000 tons** of their residents' trash and basic recyclables. With China refusing delivery, and declining disposal capacity, this cost has risen fast in recent months, and will likely continue in that direction. H447 would reduce this burden on municipal governments, and on our shrinking disposal capacity.

H447 would provide relief by **appropriately sharing this burden more fairly with producers and consumers** through a very small fee incorporated in the price of the products. If implemented as intended, it should reduce disposal volumes, decrease contamination in recycling, enable more valuable materials to be put back in service, and bring down disposal and recycling costs.

The SSRC asks that the Committee report H447 out favorably.

Respectfully submitted,

Claire L. Galkowski, Executive Director



**SOUTH SHORE RECYCLING
COOPERATIVE**

**320 Dover Rd.
Westwood, MA 02090**

Joint Committee on Environment,
Agriculture and Natural Resources
State House Room 473F
Boston, MA 02133