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Colorado legislature passes landmark bill to transform statewide recycling system

Producer Responsibility policy will provide recycling to all Colorado residents, reduce unnecessary packaging, and build more resilient domestic supply chains to ease supply chain disruptions for Colorado manufacturers

DENVER - The Colorado [Producer Responsibility for Recycling Act](#), HB22-1355, passed the Colorado Legislature on Wednesday, making Colorado the first state in the country to create a fully producer-funded and operated statewide recycling system for all consumer-facing packaging and printed paper. The bill was championed by a broad coalition of national and state businesses, local governments, environmental advocates, recyclers, and residents, demonstrating unquestionable support for easier, more accessible recycling in Colorado.

“This policy will make it easy for all Coloradans to recycle more plastics, aluminum cans, glass bottles, cardboard, and printed paper. It will also help manufacturers and businesses by creating a more resilient domestic supply of recycled materials to make new products. Amid historic supply chain disruptions, rampant climate change, and pervasive plastic pollution, there has never been a more important time to invest in recycling,” said **Kate Bailey, Policy Director at Eco-Cycle and lead author of the bill.**

HB22-1355 fundamentally transforms Colorado’s recycling system by requiring companies that sell printed paper, cardboard, and metal, glass, and plastic packaging into the state to pay for a statewide recycling system. The system will be administered by a producer-run nonprofit, known as a Producer Responsibility Organization (PRO), supported by an advisory board, and overseen by a state agency. The PRO will collect and manage producer funds and reimburse public and private service providers for collecting and processing recyclables. The goal is for every Coloradan to have free, convenient recycling that is just as easy as their trash service.

The bill was led by Recycle Colorado, the statewide recycling non-profit. “Recycle Colorado leveraged the diversity and expertise of its membership hosting over 70 stakeholder meetings with internal and external stakeholders to



craft a best-in-class policy built off of proven models and tailored to best fit the unique needs of Colorado,” said **Charles Kamenides, Board President of Recycle Colorado**.

[Colorado currently recycles just 15% of its waste](#), less than half the national average, largely because many residents lack access to convenient, affordable curbside recycling services. Meanwhile, Colorado landfills recyclable material that could have been sold for [over \\$100 million](#) and used by businesses to reduce the impact of supply-chain challenges by creating a reliable source of paper, metal, plastics and glass to make new products. Globally there are 40 countries and provinces with over two decades of proven successes with similar Producer Responsibility systems that have resulted in recycling rates of 70-80%.

“People believe we have a green state and are shocked to hear how low our diversion rates are,” said **State Representative Lisa Cutter**, one of the sponsors of HB22-1355. “This bill will protect our climate, create an easier and more consistent system of recycling throughout the state, and contribute to creating a circular economy. We’ve been laggards in this area, and this gives us the opportunity to be leaders.”

The broad, diverse coalition of supporters behind this effort speaks to the critical importance of investing in recycling as an essential and practical solution to cut climate pollution and build stronger domestic supply chains. Major international corporations, including [Amcor, The Coca-Cola Company, Danone North America, Keurig Dr Pepper, L’Oreal USA, Mars, McCain, Nestle, PepsiCo, Reckitt, SC Johnson, Unilever North America, and Walmart](#) supported the bill. **In a support letter from The Consumer Goods Forum, these business leaders stated**, “We applaud the state in drafting strong EPR [Extended Producer Responsibility] legislation that will invest in solutions for packaging waste and help create a more circular economy.”

American Beverage, which represents the non-alcoholic beverage industry, lauded the measure’s strong role for producers that enables them to run an efficient, cost-effective collection system convenient to consumers and that can achieve strong environmental outcomes.

“Our 100% recyclable bottles and cans are made to be remade, and one of our industry’s highest priorities is getting them back. Colorado’s legislation is a model for creating a circular economy for recyclables, and we encourage Gov. Polis to sign this legislation into law,” said **Katherine Lugar, president & CEO of American Beverage**, a national beverage trade organization who supported the bill.

HB22-1355 was hugely successful in bridging the urban-rural divide in Colorado and uniting a full representation of cities, towns, and counties across the state in support, as seen by the support letter from [65 local government leaders](#) spanning the spectrum of Colorado communities, from rural counties like San Miguel, Ouray, and Saguache, to Front Range cities



like

Fort Collins, Aurora, Westminster, and Denver. In addition, local government organizations Colorado Municipal League (CML), Colorado Communities for Climate Action (CC4CA), Counties and Commissioners Acting Together (CCAT), and Metro Mayors Caucus also supported the bill.

"People across Colorado want to recycle, but access varies widely," explains **Clear Creek County Commissioner and Colorado Communities for Climate Action President George Marlin**. "In rural Colorado, it can be even more expensive and difficult. Much of the business community wants to do its part in ensuring Colorado has convenient, reliable access to recycling no matter where they live. Let's let them."

"Colorado Municipal League (CML) is thrilled that local governments will soon have accessible, convenient, sustainable recycling services statewide thanks to the passage of HB22-1355. The League is thankful for the months of stakeholder work that went into the bill to create a model producer responsibility policy. HB22-1355 will transform how Colorado recycles and it will benefit every one of our 270 members," said **Meghan MacKillop, Legislative and Policy Advocate for Colorado Municipal League (CML)**.

The bill also has [strong support from a coalition of environmental groups and organizations](#), including Eco-Cycle, CoPIRG, Sierra Club, Good Business Colorado, Environment Colorado, Conservation Colorado, Green Latinos, and other in-state partners, and national partners including the Product Stewardship Institute (PSI), The Recycling Partnership, and World Wildlife Fund. And thousands of individuals—residents, business owners, and elected officials—wanting a more efficient and equitable recycling system for Colorado wrote to their senators and representatives, submitted letters-to-the editor in local media, and showed up to testify at hearings, even staying up until 1:30 am to make their voices heard.

"Too often as consumers we can't avoid the unnecessary packaging that comes with our products," said **Danny Katz, Executive Director of CoPIRG**. "Ensuring producers take on financial responsibility for the boxes, containers, bottles, paper and packaging they send us will result in less stuff to begin with and the stuff we do get will be more likely to actually get recycled. It also creates funding that can get at our state's abysmal 15% recycling rate and build a more universal recycling system statewide that is better for consumers and better for the planet."

The first U.S.-based Producer Responsibility policies were adopted in Maine and Oregon in 2021. Maine's program will only apply to packaging and not paper, and the Oregon program will only be partially funded by producers, making Colorado the first state to adopt a fully producer-funded program for all consumer-facing packaging and paper.



“By

matching effective waste management practices with accountability, Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) is an essential tool to address plastic pollution,” said **Alejandro Pérez, senior vice president, policy and government affairs, World Wildlife Fund**. “We have a lot of work to do to achieve a waste-free future, but we are one step further because of Colorado’s actions. The state is setting an example of how industry, environmentalists and policymakers can join forces to transform the way we use, reuse and recycle materials.”

The bill heads to the Governor’s desk for signature. Learn more about the benefits of Producer Responsibility, the policy details, and the coalition of supporters at www.RecyclingForAllColoradans.org.

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QUOTES FROM ADDITIONAL SUPPORTERS

“HB22-1355 will benefit our beautiful state’s environment, our businesses with a diversified and resilient supply-chain, and finally our families who will benefit from free recycling services,” said **State Senator Kevin Priola**, one of the senate sponsors.

“We often think of Colorado as being on the forefront of environmental issues, and yet you look at the recycling rate in this state, we’re not even average...we are at just a 15% recycling rate—just less than half the national average—and it is largely because people who want to live these values, want to shop in environmentally sustainable ways, who want to participate in addressing the climate crisis, literally don’t have the infrastructure to do so. They don’t have the access to convenient, affordable curbside recycling services. This bill just changed that,” says **State Senator Julie Gonzales**, co-sponsor of the bill.

“Recycling is a statewide equity access issue and today Colorado took a step in the right direction in passing HB22-1355: Producer Responsibility Program For Recycling. This is the first step in ensuring that we acknowledge the responsibility we have as a state to make sure that we are recycling and that our community is at the root of implementation.” **Ean Tafoya, State Director for GreenLatinos**.

“As an innovative and rapidly-growing plastics recycler in Colorado, we are challenged by not getting enough local feedstock of recycled plastic to make into our compounded products,” said **Adam Hill, Owner of Direct Polymers and a member of Recycle Colorado**. “We oftentimes have to bring materials in from many states away to meet our production needs, when much of that feedstock is available right here in Colorado. HB22-1355 will jump-start recycling in Colorado and will mean a larger, more consistent stream of plastic scrap that we can bring in, reprocess, and sell to local and regional manufacturers.”



“The Colorado Sierra Club celebrates the passage of HB22-1355. This measure will increase the low diversion rate in the state of Colorado. It will also incentivize companies to produce less packaging and to produce packaging that is more sustainable.” **Jan Douglas, Co-Chair of Legislative Committee for Colorado Sierra Club**

“This is great news for Colorado businesses like mine who care about what kind of world we are passing on to our children, and who want our customers to know that we’ve got their backs on recycling.” **Megan Mitchell, Cactus Jack’s Saloon and Grill, and Good Business Colorado member.**

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About Recycle Colorado

Recycle Colorado is a statewide non-profit organization working to advance infrastructure, end markets, and state and local policies in waste reduction, recovery and diversion. Recycle Colorado has over 300 members from across the state—from the public, private and non-profit sectors. <https://www.recyclecolorado.org>

About Eco-Cycle

Eco-Cycle started recycling in Colorado in 1976, and today employs over 65 staff and recycles over 60,000 tons of materials each year, making it one of the nation’s oldest and largest nonprofit recyclers and a Zero Waste pioneer. Eco-Cycle innovates, implements, and advocates for local and global Zero Waste solutions to foster a more regenerative, equitable, and climate-resilient future. For more information: www.ecocycle.org.

About American Beverage

American Beverage is the national trade organization representing the broad spectrum of companies that manufacture and distribute non-alcoholic beverages in the United States. For more information, please visit www.americanbeverage.org. For more information on our leadership initiatives, please visit www.balanceus.org and www.innovationnaturally.org.

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HB22-1355 Supporters

Local Government Groups

Colorado Communities for Climate Action (CC4CA)



Counties and Commissioners Acting Together (CCAT)

Colorado Municipal League (CML)
Metro Mayors Caucus

Local Governments

The following County Commissioners:

Emma Pinter, Adams County
Matt Jones, Boulder County
Randall Wheelock, Clear Creek County
Jeanne McQueeney, Eagle County
Matt Scherr, Eagle
Jonathan Houck, Gunnison County
Jake Niece, Ouray County
Ben Tisdell, Ouray County
Steve Child, Pitkin County

Kelly McNicholas Kury, Pitkin County
Commissioner
Rachel Richards, Pitkin County
Francie Jacober, Pitkin County
Tom McCracken, Saguache County
Scott Fetchenhier, San Juan County
Kris Holstrom, San Miguel County
Lance Waring, San Miguel County
Josh Blanchard, Summit County

The following Mayors:

Aaron Brockett, Boulder
Guyleen Castriotta, Broomfield
John Beltrone, Edgewater
Kyle Schlachter, Littleton
Ashley Stolzmann, Louisville

Corinne Platt, Ophir
John Clark, Ridgway
Kim Langmaid, Vail
Dan Richardson, Former Mayor Carbondale

City Councils:

Aspen
Golden
Longmont

The following Council Members and Trustees:

Randy Moorman, Arvada
Alison Coombs, Aurora
Elyse Hottel, Basalt
Laurie Anderson, Broomfield
Heidi Henkel, Broomfield
Jean Lim, Broomfield
James Marsh-Holschen, Broomfield
Beth Goldstone, Crested Butte
Chris Haver, Crested Butte
Paul Kashmann, Denver
Robin Kniech, Denver
Geoffrey Grimmer, Town of Eagle
Hannah Gay Keao Edgewater
Lilly Steirer, Edgewater

Christiaan van Woudenberg, Erie
Tricia Canonico, Fort Collins
Katie Soles, Fraser
Jessica Burley, Frisco
Tim Barnes, Lafayette
Tony Briggs, Lafayette
Patrick Berry, Mountain Village
Katherine Goff, Northglenn
Jenny Willford, Northglenn
Polly Enochs, Ridgway
Kevin Grambley, Ridgway
Beth Lakin, Ridgway
Tim Howard, Superior
Jonathan Staufer, Vail



Obi Ezeadi,

Rachel Hultin, Wheat Ridge

Westminster

Businesses

Consumer Goods Forum members

Amcor

The Coca Cola Company

Danone North America

L'Oréal USA

Mars, Incorporated

McCain Foods

Nestle

PepsiCo

Reckitt

SC Johnson

Unilever United States

Walmart

Recycling Businesses

Clean Valley Recycling

Eco-Cycle

Evergreen Zero Waste

Phoenix Recycling

Recycle Colorado

All Businesses

Amcor

Amalgamated Bank

American Beverage Association

Arc Thrift Stores

Ball

Brie Z Operations

Buglet Solar Electric Installation

Cactus Jack's Saloon & Grill

Clean Valley Recycling

The Coca Cola Company

Color Me Mine

Colorado Beverage Association

Cream Bean Berry

Danone North America

Desert Sun Coffee

Direct Polymers

Dogwood Consulting

Durango Compost Company

E2 Environmental Entrepreneurs

EarthHero

EcoEnclose

Ever Better

Evergreen Zero Waste

Farsighted Creative LLC

Good Business Colorado

G. E. Borusch Personal Garden Service

Green Sheen Paint

Inner Joy Bars

L'Oréal USA

Mars, Incorporated

MC Evolution

McCain Foods

Natasha Wing LLC Children's Author

Nestle

New Earth LLC

New Belgium Brewing

Pack Green Coalition

PepsiCo

Personal Garden Service

Phoenix Recycling

The Receptionist

Reckitt

Recycle Colorado

ROLL and Live Creative Studio

Scrap Kitchen

Sol Maya Cruelty Free Spa and Salon



Stained Glass

by Plouff
SC Johnson
Simple Switch
Sustainable Advisors Alliance
Table to Farm LLC
Terumo BCT
Town Hall Outdoor Company

Twiggs & Co.
Unbound Inbound
Unilever United States
Wana Brands
Wise Choice Tattoo Removal
Woodys Wood Fired Pizza
Walmart
Zova Marketing

Environmental and Nonprofit Groups

350 Colorado
Alliance Center
Basalt High School Environmental Club
Citizens Alliance for a Sustainable
Englewood
Colorado League of Women Voters
COPIRG - Colorado Public Interest
Research Group
Colorado Regenerative Recovery
Colorado Sierra Club
Conservation Colorado
DPS Students for Climate Action
Eco-Cycle

Environment Colorado
Green Latinos
High Country Conservation Center
Inland Ocean Coalition
Morgan County Waste Coalition
Out Boulder County
Product Stewardship Institute (PSI)
Recycle Colorado
The Recycling Partnership
Walking Mountain Science Center
Waste Energy Citizen Action Network
Yampa Valley Sustainability Council