January 29, 2021

S.1185-A (Kaminsky)

Title: An act to amend the environmental conservation law, in relation to establishing the extended producer responsibility act

Purpose: This bill will establish an extended producer responsibility program for paper and packaging, which would create a circular economy for recycling.

Statement of Support: As Americans we are drowning in our own packaging waste. Of the quarter of a billion tons of municipal solid waste generated every year in this country, nearly a third of it is just packaging and paper products. Only about 35% of this waste is recycled, leaving the rest to go to incinerators, landfills and uncaptured litter. Currently, manufacturers are not responsible for recovering or recycling their products and have little incentive to reduce the packaging of those products. Instead, municipalities bear the brunt of handling the collection, transportation, sorting, and processing of waste — materials which they had no control or influence on creating in the first place. Many municipalities struggle with the burden of recycling, and will continue to struggle following China’s announcement that it will significantly restrict the recyclables it will accept. As a result of increased recycling costs, municipalities are faced with the decision either to increase taxes or significantly limit what materials they can accept. Meanwhile, manufacturers continue to exacerbate the global waste crisis because there is no mandate to reduce the amount of packaging they use or incentive to transition to materials that are easier to recycle.

To prevent more paper waste from ending up in landfills, the recycling market must shift the “end-of-life” responsibility of materials from municipalities to the producers of that waste, by creating an extended producer responsibility (EPR) program for paper products and packaging materials. Under an EPR program, producers will finance the recycling of their products, be rewarded for creating easily recyclable products and use higher percentages of post-consumer recycled material. EPR programs for paper and packaging are common throughout the world, and have shown great success in Canada and Europe. In Europe, where EPR has been established for decades, some countries have reached packaging and paper products recycling rates as high as 80%, compared to a maximum of 50% in parts of the United States. The programs have increased recycling rates and reduced methane emissions by limiting the waste that goes into landfills. Through the creation of this program, New York can reduce some of the worst environmental contaminants from our landfills without an additional burden on taxpayers, and continue to lead the nation in plastic and waste pollution reduction.

The Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter Strongly Urges Your Support of S.1185-A

1 https://www.productstewardship.us/page/Packaging