



Department of Public Works
Environmental Services
Sanitation & Forestry
"Clean & Green"

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Senate Committee on Environment
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Testimony on Senate Bill 107:
Electronics Recycling Legislation

Thank you Chairman Miller and committee members for the opportunity to testify on the behalf of the City of Milwaukee. The City of Milwaukee strongly supports Senate Bill 107, and we urge its swift passage in this session. Mayor Tom Barrett created the Milwaukee Green Team in 2005 to develop a comprehensive plan for environmental sustainability and to advocate for legislation such as this electronics recycling bill. A greener and cleaner Milwaukee is our goal, and with the passage of this bill we will be one step closer to that goal. We applaud Senator Miller and all the cosponsors for their work to provide an effective solution to a growing solid waste management problem.

End-of-life consumer electronics, or e-scrap, makes up the fastest growing segment of the municipal solid waste stream. If improperly disposed, the discarded electronics pose a potential threat to human health and the environment due to the hazardous materials they often contain. Responsibly recycling electronics prevents the release of these hazards to the air and water. Recycling e-scrap also recovers valuable resources for economic use and provides multiple environmental benefits, conserving natural resources and energy. The public good clearly benefits from the recycling of discarded consumer electronics, and SB107 is exactly what the state of Wisconsin needs to make it possible for e-scrap recovery and recycling to flourish here as it has in the states that have passed similar legislation in recent years.


SB107 provides a flexible, market-driven approach that is practical, fair, and effective. Without such a producer responsibility system to manage end-of-life electronics in Wisconsin, the current model relies on progressive municipalities and concerned individuals to carry the full financial burden of recycling electronics. This has proven to be both unsustainable and inadequate in light of the growing volumes of discarded electronics going to landfills. SB107 appropriately shifts some of the responsibility for managing e-scrap onto the manufacturers of the products, internalizing more of the true costs of the products and allowing a feedback loop for the free market system to operate more efficiently.

Just when the demand for recycling consumer electronics is at its highest to date, municipal budget shortfalls impede the development of new recycling programs and threaten to derail those that now exist. The City of Milwaukee's successful collection programs are now in serious jeopardy. For several years we have offered residents the opportunity to recycle their discarded computers by accepting them at our two permanent drop-off sites. We have also conducted one-day collection events in 2008 and 2009 to allow opportunities to recycle televisions and other electronics that for budgetary reasons are not accepted in our regular program. We contract with a reputable Wisconsin-based electronics recycling company for the proper recycling of these materials, and that costs money. From 2006 - 2008 we collected and recycled over 1.35 million pounds of e-scrap from the public at a cost of about \$300,000. Our single largest collection effort came in 2009, when on March 14th we collected 248,000 pounds of electronics in less than five hours time at the Wisconsin State Fair Park. The tremendous turnout illustrates the need for increased opportunities to recycle consumer electronics. Without passage of SB107, the City of Milwaukee likely will reduce or even abandon its e-scrap collection programs in order to fund more essential city services.

It is under this context that the City of Milwaukee strongly urges swift passage of SB107 in the current legislative session. Local governments and individuals cannot continue to carry the full financial burden of responsibly managing industry's products. SB107's producer responsibility funding mechanism will position the public and private sectors to work together to meet the growing challenge of safely managing end-of-life electronics. Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

For more information, please contact:

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