



February 19, 2024

Representative Rick Hansen, Chair
Representative Sydney Jordan, Vice Chair
Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee
Minnesota House of Representatives
10 State Office Building
Saint Paul, MN 55155

RE: Support for HF 3577 - Packaging Waste and Cost Reduction Act.

Dear Chair Hansen, Vice-Chair Jordan, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments in **support** of HF 3577 on behalf of Upstream. Upstream is a US-based non-profit and leading change agency for the reuse movement in the US and Canada. We spark innovative solutions to help people, communities and businesses shift from single-use to reuse.

In our current linear economy, roughly 15% of wood harvested, 22% of aluminum mined, 36% of plastic created, and half of glass produced goes primarily to making single-use packaging that is consumed in a matter of minutes before it is trashed, recycled, or littered. This system perpetuates the extraction of precious natural resources while generating significant waste and pollution. In short: it treats people and the planet as disposable. HF 3577 will break this cycle by creating an extended producer responsibility (EPR) program for packaging and paper products with reuse provisions and incentives. **EPR is a comprehensive, systemic policy that will lay the foundation for Minnesota's transition to a circular economy.**

Successful packaging EPR programs have been operating around the world for over 35 years. In fact, packaging EPR is the most common type of EPR program globally - more than paint, electronics, household hazardous waste, appliances, or any of the other programs developed to date. Over one billion people live in places where consumer goods companies pay some or all of the costs of packaging collection and recycling. In these jurisdictions, recycling rates for covered materials are significantly higher than in countries without EPR. **Most covered producers under these systems are the same global companies that would be held responsible under an EPR program in MN, and the same ones who are now responsible for their packaging and paper products in Colorado, California, Oregon, and Maine.**

HF 3577 includes strong provisions to support not just recycling but upstream waste prevention and reuse as well, in line with [Upstream's principles](#) for reuse in EPR. While packaging EPR is a tried-and-true strategy, this bill will employ this time-tested approach to

achieve cutting edge results for people and the planet alike. When viewed through a consumption-based lens, packaging and packaged goods represent over 40% of US greenhouse gas emissions. Reuse systems are [far more effective](#) at reducing climate emissions, boosting local economies, generating domestic jobs, and of course eliminating waste than recycling and other downstream interventions, which is why reuse is increasingly being incorporated into EPR policy. For example, the CO2 impacts of disposable paper, plastic, and bioplastic cups are 3 to 10 times greater than reusable ceramic, stainless steel and glass alternatives. Over its average life, a reusable stainless steel cup at an event venue will generate *over 160 times less climate pollution* than its single-use plastic counterpart. HF 3577 will require that producers transition a portion of their packaging into reusable, returnable containers and make investments throughout the state into infrastructure that will enable all Minnesotans to access a new reuse economy. We have been working with Representative Jordan as well as other interested stakeholders to strengthen and clarify the reuse provisions throughout HF 3577, and we look forward to continuing to do so.

For too long, local governments and communities have shouldered the burden of managing packaging waste. Municipalities and community leaders are powerful catalysts for reuse and recycling, and critical players in the transition to a circular economy, but they can't get there alone. There is limited control at the local level over the products and packaging that corporations place onto the market - and limited resources for managing the associated waste. The time has come for producers to take responsibility for their products and packaging, from design through end-of-life management. **We thank Representative Jordan for her leadership on this urgent bill and strongly encourage you to favorably report it from your Committee.**

Please feel free to contact me at sydney@upstreamolutions.org if you have any questions.

Thank you for all you do,

Sydney Harris
Policy Director