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Coffman Cove - Craig - Kasaan - Klawock - Petersburg - Thorne Bay – Wrangell – Hydaburg – Tenakee Springs

April 4, 2025

Senator Bert Stedman
State Capitol, Room 518
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182
Juneau: (907) 465-3873

Honorable Senator Stedman,

The Southeast Alaska Solid Waste Authority (SEASWA) is writing in support of Senate Bill No. 61 and is also requesting an amendment to this bill.

SEASWA is a public agency formed by member communities in Southeast Alaska with the goal of providing environmentally sound and cost effective management of solid waste. Recycling is a key component of this strategy. SB61 will not only help reduce the cost for the problematic electronics wastestream but will also keep electronic waste out of landfills by encouraging responsible recycling of this material.

Electronics are difficult and costly to manage because they contain hazardous chemicals such as lead, cadmium, and mercury, as well as other emerging contaminants of concern, both financially and human health-wise. If landfilled, they take up operator time to handle and manage. And because the landfills here in the Southeast aren't lined and don't treat the leachate, a substantial liability risk is placed on our municipalities. In fact, ADEC is in the process of classifying even household electronics as hazardous waste because the leachate has high toxicity. This will bring extra burden to municipalities unless we recycle the e-wastes instead.

But with recycling, our communities have to backhaul out the waste to a processing facility, usually in Seattle. While the cost is not overly high compared to our Northern communities, it isn't cheap either. Most of our communities rely on what is ultimately federal funding to subsidize our waste programs. But reliance on soft money means continual uncertainty, layered on top of the uncertainty of federal funding.

SB61 is a fix for this predicament. It uses a market-based approach in that a level playing field is set for all manufacturers along with a goal of safe collection and recycling of spent screen electronics (TVs, computers, monitors, phones, etc.). It simply extends the cost of disposal to manufacturers. And just like buying widgets to make the product, manufacturers generally use the existing infrastructure that best fits their needs. Under the Bill, the manufacturer or a representative must communicate with the local community in assigning how they will collect and ship out the waste. This serves Southeast Alaska

communities well, such that we anticipate little change to the way materials are backhauled. But our municipalities and the non-profit recycling programs we have will not foot the bill.

We can ensure these products don't break down and cause harm to our subsistence resources, fisheries, and tourism here. While starting an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) program would seem to risk a price increase in computers, there has never been a study documenting a price increase linked with an EPR law. Just like any other modification to their products costing them more, they spread out that cost over their global market sales. Or they internalize the cost through improved efficiency. Twenty-seven other states, including Texas, Maine, and California have an electronics EPR law. Hawaii, whose shipping costs are higher than here and whose smaller islands are required to barge first to Oahu and then out, also has a program, updated in 2022. Oregon updated their law 2 years ago, and Illinois passed theirs around the same time.

While the Consumer Technology Association calls EPR a tax, it is the opposite. This is an investment for the State – contributing some up front money that can be reimbursed, every community will win by a stronger more robust and free electronics backhaul. And jobs in the recycling and transportation industries will also ensue.

Finally, this Bill supports SEASWA's goal of reducing solid waste disposal costs in Southeast Alaska. The mechanism of regional coordination developed in moving electronics should serve well for other products as well.

We note that several Southeast Alaska communities have populations between 1,500 and 25,000, a level that presents its own economies of scale and waste management considerations. This size of community is not currently recognized in the Electronics Recycling Advisory Council composition. We ask that you propose an amendment to the Bill for a seat on the Advisory Council for a community or regional entity representing community recycling programs of this size.

In closing, SEASWA supports SB61, and urges a vote to pass it out of committee. Please direct any questions to SEASWA Chair, Chris Cotta at 907-772-5422 or ccotta@petersburgak.gov. Thank you for your consideration and as always for your continued representation of our region's interests.



Chris Cotta
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