



CITY OF PORTLAND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES



1120 SW Fifth Avenue, Suite 613, Portland, Oregon 97204 ■ Mingus Mapps, Commissioner ■ Michael Jordan, Director

February 9, 2021

Representative Ken Helm, Chair
House Economic Recovery and Prosperity Committee
900 Court St. NE, HR E
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Helm and Members of the Committee,

The City of Portland strongly supports and urges you to vote yes on HB 2344 establishing labelling requirements for wipes. The City of Portland Bureau of Environmental Services manages Portland, Oregon's wastewater and stormwater infrastructure to protect public health and the environment, leading the City in preserving and restoring the health of Portland's watersheds. BES works to protect the quantity and quality of surface water and groundwater within the City and to conduct activities that plan and promote healthy ecosystems in our watersheds.

We urge you to support HB 2344 because sewer system clogs and damaged equipment throughout the U.S. have surged because of ever-increasing quantities of inappropriate materials, including wet wipes, being flushed in household and public toilets. While wastewater networks can convey solids such as human waste and small food scraps, the removal of wipes is uniquely challenging because they combine into "rag mats" and "ropes" and are impossible to untangle. Accumulation of these materials can cause sanitary sewer overflows, creating a public health hazard. Wastewater operators must use cutting tools and other heavy industrial tools to manually remove blockages and clogs from pumps, screens and other equipment. These efforts increase hazardous conditions for workers and add labor and equipment costs to municipalities.

HB 2344 would require manufacturers or retailers to place "Do Not Flush" labels and warning statements in visible locations on packages containing most types of wet wipes. This will effectively inform consumers of appropriate disposal of wet wipes after use. HB 2344 is consistent with the INDA/EDANA Code of Practice 2nd edition (published 2018), which was agreed upon by both product manufacturers and wastewater services sector trade organizations.

Wastewater agencies across the state have worked hard to educate the public about the problems created when disposable wipes are flushed. COVID-19 has increased the use and disposal of wipes, which has made the situation worse. Local governments have invested significant resources to change the public's behaviors, encouraging the public to dispose of wipes in the trash. Billing inserts, social media posts, radio and television outreach are all elements of a major outreach effort undertaken over the past year. Unfortunately, these efforts have not been successful in noticeably reducing volumes of flushed wipes in the sewer system. Clear information on wipes packaging informing consumers to "Do Not Flush" is needed now.

We urge your support of HB 2344. If you have any questions regarding these comments, please contact Eric Noll at eric.noll@portlandoregon.gov or at 503-823-6726.

Sincerely,

Michael Jordan
Director