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Senate Committee on Energy and Environment
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Chair Lieber, Vice-Chair Findley, and Members of the Committee:

The Association of Oregon Recyclers (AOR) is a 501(c)6 committed to supporting policies that promote high-quality recycling and composting, thoughtful consumption, and producer responsibility. We believe the producers that manufacture and sell products to Oregonians should have a role in how products are managed at the end of their usable life. Equity, community partnerships and community restoration are also centered in our guiding principles because we believe the reuse, repair and recycling economy should benefit everyone, including communities of color and rural areas. Our principles around equity and the environment are why *AOR supports SB 1576 and believes it is a critical piece of legislation in the 2022 legislative session.*

There is currently no convenient and consistent way for most people to recycle their old mattresses. Most mattresses sold in Oregon end up in landfills or energy recovery facilities, where their bulk and relative flexibility make them difficult to handle. In the worst case scenario, mattresses are illegally dumped in the environment. As a result, mattresses are difficult and expensive to manage and we believe mattress producers should be responsible for some of those the burdens and costs their products create. This stewardship program created by SB 1576 will help build recycling infrastructure for mattresses that is currently lacking in our state. Once disassembled, up to 85 percent of a typical mattress is recyclable. The metal, foam, cotton and wood used to make a mattress are valuable materials and can be used to make new products. SB 1576 will help leverage the financial resources needed to expand mattress processing throughout our state.

There are currently three states that benefit from product stewardship laws for mattresses. Since the first program began in 2015 in Connecticut, collectively the three programs have recycled millions of mattresses. In California alone, more than 1,511,553 mattresses were collected in 2020 in addition to 75,904 illegally dumped mattresses and of all the mattresses collected, 77% of them were recycled. While there have been many positive benefits, the product stewardship laws in these states have also demonstrated how critical strict reporting and enforcement standards are for successful implementation. Most mattresses contain chemicals (flame retardants, for example) that are harmful when released into the environment. Strong regulatory requirements will ensure the mattresses are handled responsibly and do not have a negative health impacts on the workers handling and processing them, or on surrounding communities. We are pleased SB 1576 includes detailed reporting requirements and we believe without these enforcement provisions, this bill would have unintended consequences.

AOR believes SB 1576 is the type of policy we need to harness the environmental and economic value of mattresses by making recycling more convenient and accessible to everyone. We urge you to move it forward.

Sincerely,

Kristin Leichner
Chair, Association of Oregon Recyclers

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