INDEPENDENCE
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February 13, 2025

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

RE: Support for SB526 Relating to Microfibers

Chair Sollman and Members of the Senate Committee on Energy and Environment:

SB526 addressing the environmental impact of microfibers is strongly supported. Microfibers, defined as solid, polymeric, fibrous materials less than five millimeters in all dimensions, are released from fiber-based products during production, manufacturing, everyday use, washing, and cleaning. They subsequently enter the environment through wastewater, stormwater, runoff, and atmospheric transport. Once present, microfibers are extremely challenging to remove.

Of concern is the accumulation of microfibers in wastewater treatment systems, particularly in lagoons. Wastewater lagoons are engineered basins that utilize natural processes to treat sewage and industrial waste. Over time, solids accumulate at the bottom of these lagoons, forming sludge that requires periodic removal to maintain treatment efficiency. The introduction of microfibers into these systems can exacerbate sludge accumulation, thereby increasing the frequency and cost of biosolid removal.

Research indicates that excessive sludge buildup can lead to intensified odors and elevated concentrations of biochemical oxygen demand (BOD), total suspended solids (TSS), nutrients like ammonia, and pathogens in the effluent. This not only compromises the effectiveness of wastewater treatment but also poses environmental and public health risks. The removal and disposal of such sludge present significant environmental challenges and financial burdens for lagoon operators like the City of Independence.

By implementing measures to reduce microfiber pollution, we can mitigate their contribution to sludge accumulation in wastewater lagoons. This proactive approach will enhance the efficiency of wastewater treatment processes, reduce operational costs associated with sludge management, and protect our ecosystems from the adverse effects of microfiber contamination.

Sincerely,

Kenna L. West

Kenna West, City Manager

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