



PO BOX 1264
Tualatin, OR 97062
503-233-3056

www.oregonrecyclers.org

February 18, 2025

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

RE: HB 2062 – Support

Chair Lively, Vice-Chairs Gamba and Levy 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. AOR's diverse membership includes more than 200 businesses, governments, nonprofits and individuals working together on the common goal of achieving a system of sustainable materials management in Oregon. 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 and community partnerships 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. These principles and our drive to serve our communities are why AOR supports HB 2062.

AOR supports HB 2062 as a top priority because it will reduce battery-caused fires at garbage and recycling facilities operated by our members across the state. When batteries are thrown into garbage or recycling bins and end up at our members' recycling and disposal facilities, they are causing catastrophic fires, putting our essential waste workers and solid waste infrastructure at risk. Once in a load of garbage or recycling batteries are crushed or punctured at solid waste facilities with certain types immediately going into thermal runaway events, resulting high temperature fires that cannot easily be put out. As a result, costs are skyrocketing for solid waste businesses and ratepayers as they invest in exponential increases in insurance premiums and fire mitigation equipment.

It is estimated that more than 1.4 million pounds of batteries are currently disposed in Oregon each year. We expect these numbers to dramatically increase as more connected, portable and mobile devices – powered by batteries – are sold into our state. AOR members are doing what they can to lessen the impact of battery fires by starting their own collection programs and taking batteries back through household hazardous waste programs, all at the expense of rate payers. Still, battery fires continue to increase in frequency, for example AOR Member Deschutes County, Oregon, is fighting more than one fire per week in their disposal facilities and collection vehicles. One of our larger member companies, Waste Connections, with waste and recycling operations located throughout the state, has identified an increasing number of battery-attributable fires in all phases of their business: recycle processing facilities, transfer stations, landfills, trucks on route, and construction debris processing facilities. Our membership across the state is desperate for a solution to turn this trend of increasing battery fires around.

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HB 2062 not only will keep batteries out of our garbage and recycling bins, it also supports waste reduction and recycling. Batteries collected by a producer responsibility organization would be responsibly managed and recycled, extracting valuable nickel, cobalt, lithium, copper, aluminum and steel. These rare earth minerals are in high demand and domestic supplies are lacking as battery powered systems proliferate throughout our economy.

In closing, AOR members strongly believe a battery extended producer responsibility program as outlined in HB 2062 would provide safer options for residents to dispose of used batteries, increase the number of batteries recycled, lower fire risk at essential waste management facilities, decrease the need to extract raw minerals for domestic battery production, and reduce ratepayer costs. With the adoption of HB 2062, Oregon would join 12 states across the country already working with battery producers to develop producer responsibility programs to provide residents with safe and accessible battery recycling options.

AOR urges your support for this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

Joel Schoening
Chair, Association of Oregon Recyclers

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