



April 5, 2021

The Honorable Ben Allen
Chair of the Senate Environmental Quality Committee
California State Capitol, Room 2205
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: SB 289 (Newman) Better Battery Recycling and Fire Risk Reduction Act of 2021 – SUPPORT

Dear Chair Allen:

We, the undersigned organizations, are pleased to support SB 289 (Newman), which would create a convenient, statewide, producer-run collection and recycling program for loose and product-embedded batteries.

Due to the hazardous metals and corrosive materials that batteries contain, California classifies batteries as hazardous waste and bans them from solid waste landfills. When consumers are done with their loose batteries and portable electronics, they must collect, sort, and ultimately find an appropriate disposal option. Unfortunately,

California currently lacks a streamlined and convenient collection and recycling system for batteries and batteries embedded in products.

Because of a combination of increased consumption and a lack of convenient disposal options, higher levels of toxic batteries and products are entering the waste stream. When improperly discarded, lithium-ion (Li-ion) batteries in particular pose serious fire, health, and safety hazards. The influx of improperly disposed of Li-ion batteries into the waste stream has resulted in an alarming number of material recovery facilities, waste collection trucks, and landfills experiencing fires.

Oftentimes, Li-ion batteries are embedded in and irremovable from products, such as phones, laptops, and power tools. When loose Li-ion batteries or Li-ion batteries embedded in products experience intense physical pressure – which is common in California’s waste processing system – the batteries can spark a fire or even explode. According to FireRover’s November 2020 report, over 1,800 fires were experienced at MRFs and other solid waste and recycling facilities in the US and Canada in the prior 12 months, including “22 reported injuries and three deaths that can either be directly or indirectly attributed to these fire incidents”.¹ The majority of these fires have been known to be caused by Li-ion batteries.

For the average consumer, it can often be difficult to distinguish between chemistries of batteries. Therefore, in order to ensure the proper disposal of all battery chemistries and reduce the fire and safety risk, SB 289 (Newman) would require free collection bins for most loose and product-embedded batteries at convenient retail locations across the state. SB 289 (Newman) would also encourage manufacturers to be more responsible for the life cycle of their products by creating a producer-run program. Lastly, SB 289 (Newman) would create a consumer outreach and education campaign to further encourage the proper disposal of all batteries.

Manufacturers must be more responsible for the products they create – both loose batteries and ones embedded in other products – if we are going to protect our workers, communities, and waste management infrastructure from battery-related fires.

For these reasons, we are pleased to support SB 289 (Newman).

Sincerely,



Nate Miley, Vice President
Alameda County Board of Supervisors

¹ FireRover, (Nov, 2020). Fire Report: Another Fire Surge?



Katherine O'Dea, Executive Director
Save Our Shores



Kirsten Liske, Vice President Community Programs
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Priscilla Quiroz , Legislative Advocate
SWANA California Chapters Legislative Task Force (LTF)



Laura J. Ferrante, Government Affairs Advocate
Resource Recovery Coalition of California



Jim Lindburg, Legislative Consultant
Friends Committee on Legislation of California



Ken Etherington, Executive Director
Central Coast Costa Solid Waste Authority (RecycleSmart)

Cc: The Honorable Josh Newman
The Honorable Members of the Senate Environmental Quality Committee