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Senator Josh Newman's Landmark Textile Recycling Bill Advances in California Assembly

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Senate Bill 707 (SB 707), a landmark, first-in-the-country, textile-recycling bill from Senator Josh Newman (D-Fullerton), passed the California Assembly Natural Resources Committee with a 9-3 vote. The bill, also known as the Responsible Textile Recovery Act of 2024, establishes a robust Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) program that will require producers to implement and fund a program to facilitate the reuse, repair, and recycling of clothing and textile fibers.

The Responsible Textile Recovery Act of 2024 and the EPR program that it creates have the potential to develop previously untapped or underutilized upcycling and recycling clothing and fiber markets, as well as to support ongoing state efforts to encourage the repair and reuse of clothing and textiles.

SB 707 will facilitate a transition to a sustainable, market-aligned, and circular economy for textiles, unlocking both new production and consumption opportunities that will benefit the environment, all at a relatively low cost to the state, market participants, and California consumers. The bill will also strengthen the ability of thrift stores and charities to handle unsellable garments and combat textile waste by incentivizing the use of more sustainable and easier-to-recycle materials.

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The fashion industry has been identified as a top industrial polluter, accounting for approximately 10% of global carbon emissions. As textiles decompose in landfills, they emit methane gas and leach dyes and chemicals into the soil and groundwater, further contributing to environmental decay.

The rise of “fast fashion,” or the marketing and sale of low-cost, low-quality garments that fall out of vogue with increasing speed, is a major contributor to these devastating trends. In 2021, approximately 1.2 million tons of textiles were disposed of in California. Despite 95% of textiles being reusable or recyclable, only 15% are currently recycled or reused.

“I’m very proud of the thoughtful and thorough work, involving stakeholders at every point of the value chain, that has gone into SB 707 to produce a bill that will have an immensely positive impact on our state and on the environment,” said Senator Newman. “Textile waste is a growing environmental issue that will require innovation and collaboration. This bill, and the groundbreaking program it will enable, will make California a global leader in textile recycling and waste reduction.”

Since its introduction last year, SB 707 has been subject to extensive stakeholder engagement. This collaborative process has resulted in dozens of improvements as the result of hundreds of hours of stakeholder meetings with a diverse coalition, including environmental organizations, industry leaders, and community groups.

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Over the course of the legislative process, the bill has received widespread support, a testament to its importance and potential impact. This support includes the California Product Stewardship Council (CPSC), IKEA, Goodwill, Sierra Club California, Republic Services, as well as numerous local governments, agencies, and sanitation districts.

"The industry has really shown up for the stakeholder process for SB 707. As sponsors of the bill, alongside Senator Newman, we've led countless meetings, workshops, and presentations on the bill," says Joanne Brasch, Director of Advocacy from the California Product Stewardship Council. "The proposed program will provide equitable funding to reuse, repair, and recycling businesses and incentivize producers to adopt less wasteful production and greener designs."

"At IKEA, we have an ambition to become a circular business by 2030. To achieve this, we must partner with policymakers to support efforts in creating more circular systems for textiles and other products," said Mardi Ditze, IKEA U.S. Sustainability Manager. "We applaud Senator Newman for leading a collaborative process with industry stakeholders on SB 707 and support efforts to increase textile circularity in California and across the U.S."

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"Textile recycling is a growing industry domestically, creating jobs and reviving manufacturing in areas near recycling facilities," said Peter Majeranowski, CEO of Circ, Inc., a leading textile recycler. "We've seen the fashion industry really step up to adopt fibers and yarns with lower impacts. Circ thanks Senator Newman for leading in California to incentive funding for textile recycling."

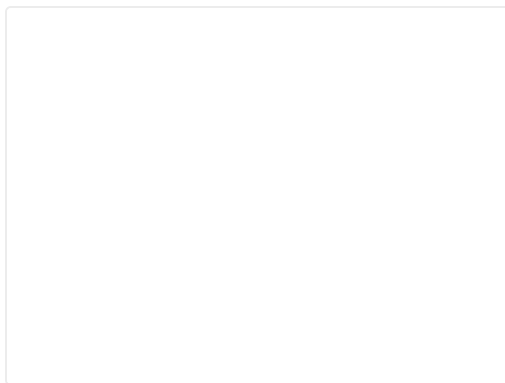
SB 707 now transitions to the Assembly Appropriations Committee for a hearing before moving to the full Assembly.

For more information, contact Brian Wheatley at brian.wheatley@sen.ca.gov.

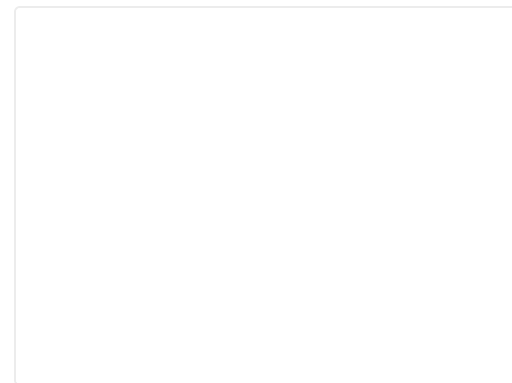
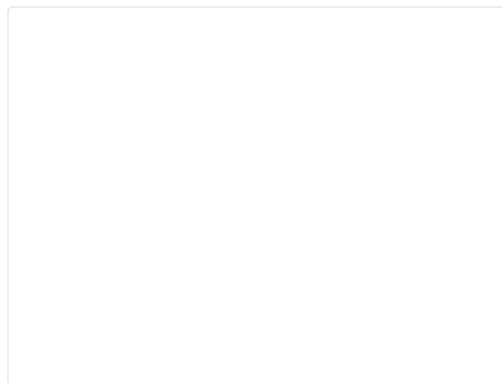
Hearing is available to watch: <https://youtu.be/E8l6l-kZowU>

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