

Pending California bill would require apparel producers to establish waste recycling programs

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Dive Brief:

- A pending California bill which would require apparel producers to be responsible for the collection and recycling of their products survived a legislative deadline earlier this week.
- If passed, [California Senate Bill 707](#) would enact the Responsible Textile Recovery Act of 2023, which establishes an Extended Producer Responsibility program for apparel, textiles, or textile articles and governs the collection and recycling of apparel and textiles.
- Though this would be a California law, if passed, the legislation would impact any fashion company that sells products in the state.

Dive Insight:

California already has a similar law that regulates the disposal, management and recycling of solid waste and establishes stewardship programs for certain products including carpet, mattresses, pharmaceuticals and sharps waste.

The new bill would establish a similar program for the fashion industry, and include apparel and textile articles that are unsuitable for reuse by a consumer in their current state or condition. It would include footwear, swimwear, undergarments and handbags, among other products.

Under the law, operators would be required to complete a stewardship plan for waste and submit it to the Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery for review and approval, and would require the program operator to review it every 5 years. It would also require an annual report from producers.

Penalties for violating the program requirements wouldn't exceed \$10,000 a day, or exceed \$50,000 a day for "intentional, knowing, or reckless" violation of it.

The bill was introduced in February by Senators Josh Newman, Nancy Skinner and Scott Wiener. It's supported by the California Product Stewardship Council, and it's currently in assembly and held at desk.

The act could encourage Californians to bring unwanted clothing to thrift stores and charities for donation, but under the law these collection sites could also become part of a system for sorting and recycling textiles that can't be used or sold again.

CalRecycle's 2020 report on solid waste in California, which was cited in the proposal, found that apparel and textiles were the sixth most prevalent type of material disposed of in single family residences in 2018. Also in 2018, Californians disposed of nearly 1.2 million metric tons of textiles.

"What I've been saying for a long time [is] either reduce waste and clean up your processes yourself or you will be regulated," Heidi Sanborn, executive director of National Stewardship Action Council, said in an email. "[The Fashion industry] failed to take action quickly enough and now they're going to be regulated."

Sanborn's organization is one of the bill's supporters and advocates for a circular economy.

Developing a takeback program run by manufacturers for any product is difficult, but that is even more true for textiles, Nick Lapis, director of advocacy for Californians Against Waste said in an email. He said his group commended SB 707 for proposing "an ambitious, but workable, solution to this growing problem."