

May 22, 2024

U.S. Senate Committee on Environment & Public Works
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: Hearing on Efforts to Improve Reuse and Recycling

Dear Chairman Carper, Ranking Member Capito, and members of the Committee,

The Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA) applauds the Committee on Environment & Public Works (EPW) for holding a hearing on Efforts to Improve Reuse and Recycling. There is a clear need for improved recycling and reuse programs in communities across the United States. Federal funding and support for recycling and reuse would lead to long-term growth and sustainability of these systems, strengthening the economy and the environment.

SWANA is an organization of 10,000 public and private sector professionals committed to advancing from solid waste management to resource management through a shared emphasis on education, advocacy, and research. Our members also include non-profits, universities, students, and other sectors. For more than 60 years, SWANA has been the leading association in the solid waste management field. SWANA serves industry professionals through technical conferences, certifications, publications, and a large offering of technical training courses. Members of SWANA and members of the media turn to SWANA as a resource to learn about federal initiatives, opportunities, and regulations.

Recycling and reuse are important topics for SWANA members, especially the owners and operators of recycling collections and sorting systems. SWANA members include the individuals who handle resident-facing outreach, manage resident drop-off centers, supervise collections routes, run transfer stations, manage Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs), market recyclable materials, and much more.

The funding from the Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling (SWIFR) Grants is making a difference for communities, states, and territories, enabling them to implement reduction, reuse, and recycling programs, including organics recycling, that they may not have otherwise been able to fund. While this funding is historic and significant, the national need still outweighs the funding available. SWANA encourages the EPW Committee to enact ongoing funding to support recycling systems.

In addition to funding, SWANA strongly supports the federal government having an active and visible role at the national level to create a stronger, more resilient, and cost-effective national recycling system. SWANA previously submitted comments on the *National Recycling Strategy* which focused on reducing contamination, improving processing efficiency, and improving markets. The federal government should continue to pursue the objectives and strategies described in this strategy.



The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is the lead on the implementation of the *National Recycling Strategy* and SWANA encourages the EPA to increase collaboration with other government agencies such as the Chamber of Commerce to support markets for recycled materials and private investment in recycling and circular economy infrastructure. SWANA also recommends that the federal government connect with economic development departments at the state and local level to provide resources on recycling and encourage investment.

National collaboration and leadership are necessary to create a more comprehensive, resilient, and cost-effective recycling system. It is important to support the entire system, from design and labeling of materials, through collection and processing, to support for creating viable end products with market demand. Policies and proactive collaboration with manufacturers to design for recycling and to incorporate recycled content into packaging and products will make recycling systems more self-sufficient in the long-term. As a member of the US Plastics Pact, SWANA is collaborating with brands to achieve recyclable, compostable, and reusable packaging and to strengthen recycling systems to provide recycled content. As the federal government works to advance circular economy initiatives, SWANA is prepared to collaborate and to support its members in implementation of programs.

SWANA welcomes collaboration with elected officials and government agencies to connect directly with our members who are implementing programs, identifying the impacts of SWIFR grants implemented, as well as the remaining gaps and funding needs. Please contact the undersigned at koldendorf@swana.org.

Sincerely,

Kristyn Oldendorf
Kristyn Oldendorf
Director of Public Policy

