



Support for Senate Bill 800 Waste Electronic Equipment Recovery Act
Testimony of Shannon Reiter, President of Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful
Pennsylvania Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee
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Good morning. Thank you Chairman Yaw and members of the Committee for hosting this hearing and inviting me to provide testimony. My name is Shannon Reiter, President of Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful.

Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful is the state affiliate of Keep America Beautiful. Our mission is empowering Pennsylvanians to make our communities clean and beautiful. Our vision is very simple, a clean and beautiful Pennsylvania.

We work with communities all across the state through a broad network which includes more than 30 county and municipal affiliates, thousands of community partners including conservation districts, planning commissions, and solid waste authorities, but also scout troops and garden clubs. The real strength of our network lies in the hundreds of thousands of volunteer community stewards that participate annually in our community improvement programming.

In total, the joint efforts of our network has engaged more than **2 million volunteers** to cleanup more than **126 million pounds of trash** from our roadsides, riverbanks, community parks, vacant lots, rivers and streams. Through various special collection programs, the Keep

Pennsylvania Beautiful network has properly disposed of **872,000 tires** and recycled more than **4.8 million pounds of electronics**.

Our goal, however, isn't to clean up trash, it is to prevent these materials from being dumped in the first place. **KPB is committed to providing education about and access to convenient and affordable proper disposal options.**

In 2014, we released a report on illegal dumping in Pennsylvania. In that report, titled *Illegal Dumping in Pennsylvania: A Decade of Discovery*, we outlined not only the scope of the problem but recommendations for policy and programs to remediate illegal dumping. Here is what we know:

- Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful, from 2005-2013, identified more than 6,200 illegal dumpsites across the state
- **There is less illegal dumping in areas where there is universal access to waste and recycling collection.**
- If residents cannot dispose of bulky items at the curb or at a convenient drop off center, public works crews and volunteers are more likely to see them dumped along the roads and over hillsides,
- Remediation of dumpsites is costly, averaging \$614/ton with the average community cleanup costing \$2,947
- These dumps are unsightly and drive down property values.
- They contaminate our soil and groundwater supplies.

- They are a public health hazard as they attract disease-spreading rodents and serve as breeding grounds for mosquitos.
- Discarded e-waste often contains lead, cadmium and mercury that are hazardous waste and, if not contained, also pose a threat to public health.
- Trash attracts trash and if those old televisions, or other materials are left today—tomorrow more trash will appear as it signals to others that it's ok to dump there, that at some point, someone will pick it up, or that the community simply doesn't care.

While Senate Bill 800 doesn't address all problem materials and won't solve all illegal dumping, it does take a significant step towards providing convenient and affordable access for electronics recycling which is what Pennsylvanians so desperately need.

Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful does not have quantitative data on electronics dumping. However, we can confidently and unequivocally say that since Act 108, we have seen an exponential increase in electronics dumping and that is not slowing down. We **continue to find piles of stripped televisions- carcasses of broken plastic and shards of leaded glass scattered in open fields, on dead-end streets, along intersections and over riverbanks.** Individuals and businesses are abandoning them into nearby dumpsters or at recycling drop-offs — even when it is clearly posted that these materials are not accepted.

All of this is costing our communities valuable resources. While the dumping continues, over the years, communities have become more responsive. Local and county governments across the state are doing their best to address the electronics dumping issue and are often left

with tens to hundreds of illegally dumped televisions piled up in warehouses and alley ways. Communities are then forced to absorb the costs of recycling and disposing of these materials.

Some communities are holding special collections once or twice a year in effort to capture the material before it gets dumped. These collections, while better than nothing, are largely inefficient and costly for both the host community and the residents. As examples of these reactionary efforts, I offer you a few stories from the field:

In **Hempfield Township, Westmoreland County**, after a fire broke out at Westmoreland Cleanways and Recycling, which regularly offered residents a convenient electronics disposal option, dumping spiked at clothing donation bins in and around the City of Greensburg and surrounding Township. While public works crews cleaned up the various piles of growing electronics, there's on-going concern about the dangers left behind by the broken leaded glass and other materials. Dumping continues to this day as there is still no convenient and affordable outlet in Greensburg.

In **Penbrook Borough, Dauphin County** illegal dumping of electronics continues to get worse over the years. While the Borough is working to enforce their dumping laws, it is hard to pin down responsible parties which further frustrates community members and strains local relationships. Residents routinely leave televisions on the curb which end up sitting there for long periods of time. The Borough must collect these materials and assume financial responsibility for storage and recycling and disposal.

In **Charleroi Borough, Washington County**, public works crews have been inundated with illegally dumped televisions. The Borough, after picking them up from roadways, vacant

lots, etc., has maxed out their storage units and has now resorted to storing them in alleys between their buildings. This of course, invites additional dumping of materials thus compounding the existing problem. Currently, there is no end in sight and public works continue to pile up discarded electronics in public spaces.

Tatamy Borough in conjunction with surrounding communities started a special collections program for electronics to ensure residents had a place to take their materials. These events rely on support from Northampton County, municipality buy-in, municipal officials volunteering their time, and consumer fees. Residents are paying up to \$50 to dispose of their televisions.

Venango County has experienced a sharp decline in access to rural recycling drop-offs due to electronics dumping. Since 2013, 6 rural recycling drop-off sites have closed, two in 2017. There are only two drop-off sites remaining to service a rural county of 675 square miles and a population of 54,000. Of the two remaining, one is County maintained and one is municipal maintained. The municipal one is on the verge of shutting down. Many rural counties have experienced this same trend.

These are the scenarios that are playing out all over the state. Local governments are reacting to deal with a problem that they can't fix. They are doing the best they can, however, reaction is costly, inefficient and does not solve the problem. It has become an unfunded mandate for local communities.

In our opinion, the best way to address the dumping of these materials is to be proactive and provide convenient and affordable access to everyone in Pennsylvania. Senate

Bill 800 does this through the State default plan which guarantees access to counties not covered under an approved individual alternative plan or joint alternative plan. The State default plan establishes an infrastructure of convenience centers that ensures that in each of the 67 counties, there is a place that offers residents convenient access to proper disposal and recycling of their electronics.

Senate Bill 800 provides flexibility to local and county governments to determine the best way to establish this network and encourages collaboration whenever possible by allowing for a network of satellite centers and curbside collection programs where deemed appropriate.

Senate Bill 800 provides for a funding mechanism to establish the infrastructure but does not pass on the costs of collection, consolidation, transportation, and or recovery of waste electronic equipment to the consumer or local municipalities. Those costs remain with the original equipment manufacturers. KPB believes that the proposed .5% waste electronics equipment fee at the time of sale is appropriate and will be accepted by consumers.

Finally, consumer education is critical when a law such as the Covered Device Recycling Act or Waste Electronic Equipment Recovery Act is passed- as the law requires consumers to change behavior. Behavioral psychologists indicate that recycling behavior can be positively influenced through:

- Convenience
- Communication
- Cause (make an emotional connection)

We know addressing the convenience factor has the greatest potential to increase recycling participation and we believe Senate Bill 800 does this. However, consumers need to be informed on what, where and when the material can be recycled. We believe that while Senate Bill 800 provides for communication standards to ensure residents are aware of their options, in our experience it is never enough. We stress the importance of on-going consumer education at the state, county and local level to ensure maximum return and participation.

Finally, information is not always enough- consumers need to have a reason, a cause. They need to be compelled to recycle, to induce that desired behavior change- **making it hard for consumers to recycle—only defeats the intent of the law.**

