



**STATEMENT OF
BENJAMIN A. HARVEY, PRESIDENT
E.L. HARVEY & SONS, INC.**

**ON BEHALF OF
THE NATIONAL WASTE & RECYCLING
ASSOCIATION**

**REGARDING
RECYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE AND
ACCESSIBILITY PROGRAM
&
RECYCLING AND COMPOSTING
ACCOUNTABILITY ACT**

**BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT & PUBLIC WORKS**

UNITED STATES SENATE

February 2, 2022

Good morning, Chairman Carper, Ranking Member Capito and Members of the Committee:

My name is Ben Harvey, and I am president of Westborough, Massachusetts-based E. L. Harvey & Sons Inc., a full-service waste and recycling firm that provides services for commercial and industrial corporations and municipalities throughout eastern Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Maine. I am testifying today in my capacity as Chairman of the National Waste & Recycling Association (also referred to as “NWRA” or “the association”), which represents the private sector waste and recycling industry.

I thank you for the opportunity to appear before the committee today and present to you the industry’s perspective on recycling infrastructure and accessibility and to discuss its impact on our industry.

By way of background, E. L. Harvey & Sons Inc. was founded in 1911 and is a four-generation family-operated business. In 2021, it became a subsidiary of Waste Connections, Inc. We handle residential, commercial, and construction contracts that include waste disposal, recycling services, secure document shredding, product destruction, food waste and more. We currently have over 4,000 commercial clients that range from hospitals and business parks to malls and government agencies. Our commercial waste and recycling can be custom-tailored to fit the needs of individual businesses. Residential customers have access to a variety of services including curbside recycling collection, dumpster rentals and junk removal.

E.L. Harvey runs two waste disposal and recycling sites, each accessible to the public. Our facilities can handle a wide range of items, including single stream recycling, construction & demolition material, electronics, and other types of waste. In 2007, E.L. Harvey committed to recycling construction materials by building a new facility solely for that purpose and installing state-of-the-art material sorting equipment. The facility allows us to separate different materials, making the process both quicker and more efficient.

The National Waste & Recycling Association is the voice for the private sector waste and recycling industry that is essential to maintaining the quality of American life. The delivery of waste and recycling services impacts all residential, commercial, and industrial properties on a daily basis.

NWRA’s mission is to provide leadership, advocacy, research, education, and safety expertise to promote the waste and recycling industry. NWRA’s goal is to create a favorable business climate where our members can prosper and provide safe, economically sustainable, and environmentally responsible services and jobs that benefit communities throughout America.

Association members operate in all 50 states and the District of Columbia and can be found in most, if not all, U.S. congressional districts. Waste and recycling facilities number nearly 18,000 scattered throughout the U.S., mirroring population centers. NWRA’s nearly 700 members are a mix of publicly traded and privately owned local, regional and Fortune 500 national and international companies. NWRA represents approximately 70 percent of the private sector waste and recycling market.

It is estimated that the private sector waste and recycling industry accounts for more than one million jobs and generates nearly a quarter of a trillion dollars in U.S. GDP. The industry's publicly traded companies are among the largest components of the Dow Jones U.S. Waste & Disposal Index

Ensuring that all Americans have access to recycling provides equity and ensures sustainable materials management across the nation. However, rural areas often have unique challenges in collecting recyclables and accessing recycling markets leaving these communities underserved. Worse, global import restrictions over the past few years have resulted in reduced recycling access.

Recycling has become increasingly complex over the past twenty years. The public demands greater amounts of packaging be recycled. To manage this growing diversity of materials, materials recovery facilities, or MRFs, must have more and increasingly sophisticated equipment. Today's MRFs do not just have magnets, eddy current separators and screens. They include optical sorters and robots. To account for the increasing equipment costs of today's modern MRF, the MRFs are larger and service regions rather than single communities. They are also increasingly run by private sector companies that can adapt quickly to the changing makeup of packaging.

These attributes make recycling in rural communities particularly challenging. MRFs are sited near population centers, sometimes great distances from geographically remote rural communities. Rather than curbside collection, rural residential recycling often consists of drop-off programs or private sector subscription programs with limited participation. Once recyclables are collected, transporting the material to processing facilities and ultimately to end markets represents another hurdle.

However, rural recycling can achieve success through the "hub and spoke" model, which creates consolidation hubs that service the spokes leading out to small communities. These recycling hubs, often referred to as transfer stations, are where smaller truckloads of materials can be consolidated into larger truckloads for their final transfer to processing facilities. Rural communities interested in adopting such a model would benefit from grants for transfer station infrastructure construction, recycling transfer tractors and trailers. Hub and spoke systems reduce transportation and provide much needed operational efficiency. It improves recycling access and lowers the overall costs for rural areas thereby making recycling much more viable for them. That is why I was encouraged by the approach undertaken by Senator Capito's legislation.

Large, privately operated MRFs are more resilient to market downturns because of their close integration with materials buyers and other stakeholders. Their large size contributes to economies of scale that improve operational efficiencies. They have relationships with end markets and leverage due to the volume of materials that are managed. Privately-operated MRFs typically share revenues from the sale of the processed recyclables with the communities that bring the materials to them.

The private and public sector mutually benefit from a model where the public sector can efficiently collect materials from rural areas and transfer them to the privately operated MRFs for

processing. We wholeheartedly support a program where rural communities can access the global recycling markets.

Whatever we do, however, needs to be undergirded with good data. Recycling, composting and waste composition has changed significantly over time. For example, paper and cardboard have long made up the largest component of our recyclables but this has changed significantly with newspapers now only a third of what they were in 2005 and cardboard boxes from households increasing due to what we call the “Amazon effect.” Food waste has become the largest part of what ends up in our landfills and the amount of clothing disposed has doubled over the last twenty years. As a businessman, it is important for me to be able to make decisions founded on good data. That’s why I’m also pleased to support the Recycling and Composting Accountability Act. This act will empower EPA to perform the studies that we need.

Again, thank you Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Capito for this opportunity to testify today. I will be happy to respond to any questions.