

Table of Contents

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Committee on Environment
and Public Works

Washington, D.C.

STATEMENT OF:	PAGE:
THE HONORABLE THOMAS R. CARPER, A UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF DELAWARE	3
THE HONORABLE SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO, A UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA	10
THE HONORABLE JOHN BOOZMAN, A UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF ARKANSAS	16
RHODES YEPSEN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BIODEGRADABLE PRODUCTS INSTITUTE	21
PASHON MURRAY, FOUNDER, DETROIT DIRT	26
BENJAMIN HARVEY, PRESIDENT, E.L. HARVEY AND SONS INCORPORATED	32
CHARLES LEVELL HAIRSTON, VICE PRESIDENT AND GENERAL MANAGER FOR RECYCLING AND RECOVERED FIBER, INTERNATIONAL PAPER	37

LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS TO IMPROVE DOMESTIC RECYCLING AND
COMPOSTING PROGRAMS

Wednesday, February 2, 2022

United States Senate

Committee on Environment and Public Works

Washington, D.C.

The committee, met, pursuant to notice, at 10:10 a.m. in room 106, Dirksen Senate Office Building, the Honorable Thomas R. Carper [chairman of the committee] presiding.

Present: Senators Carper, Capito, Whitehouse, Stabenow, Kelly, Boozman, Sullivan.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE THOMAS R. CARPER, A UNITED STATES
SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF DELAWARE

Senator Carper. This committee will come to order.

I welcome a number of our witnesses that are here in person, I think three or four. Another person is joining us remotely. We welcome all four of you.

I am going to give an opening statement, and our Ranking Member, Senator Capito, will do as well. Senator Boozman, who is the co-chair of the Senate Caucus on Recycling will be speaking as well, in an opening statement.

I was talking to Pashon, who is visiting us from Detroit, Michigan, where my Detroit Tigers are. Hopefully, pitchers and catchers are going to report in about ten days if they can settle this strike. I hope they will, but I have passion. One of my passions, we were up here talking about football, about the Bengals. We have some Bengals fans up here, but I am a huge Detroit Tigers fan. Pashon, a special welcome to you.

I am also passionate about recycling and composting. I have told Pashon and Rhodes, I said, I haven't recycled since this morning. Coming down on the train, the Amtrak takes recycling, and we have composting capabilities in all of our offices. So I composted right before I came over here, all the banana peels and apple cores and stuff that I wanted to compost. So these are things that I care about personally and have

forever.

Senator Capito and colleagues, I think when I was a 22-year-old Naval flight officer-in-training in California just joined my squadron, and we were stationed near Palo Alto, California, and I used to recycle every month. I would drive over to the recycling center about two miles from my house and recycle when it wasn't that fashionable. So I have been doing this for a while, and I am too old to quit.

Having said that, let me just get serious here, although I have been serious, but we have another big Detroit Tigers fan here, too, Senator Debbie Stabenow. She and I share this passion.

Good morning. I am pleased to call this hearing to order. Let me start by thanking the witnesses for your willingness to be here today as we discuss two draft pieces of legislation related to recycling and composting.

Rhodes Yepsen, is that the way you pronounce your name, Rhodes Yepsen? We don't have a lot of Yepsens that come here, or a lot of Rhodes, so we are especially delighted to have you here.

Pashon, I don't recall in 20 years in the Senate ever having, from Detroit or anyplace else, Debbie, having a Pashon as a witness, but we are delighted that you are both here.

Charles Levell, we are happy, Charles, to welcome you.

We have, joining us remotely, we have one more person, I believe. Is that correct? I am looking on my statement here, to see who that person is. I don't see it. Ben Harvey. Ben, welcome Ben. We are glad you are out there and joining us remotely.

As Ranking Member Capito, Senator Boozman, our Recycling Caucus co-chair, and many of our colleagues know, the topic of today's hearing is something that, as I have just mentioned, I care very deeply about. I won't bore you again with my passion and where it came from. But we all have a part to play to improve our Nation's recycling and composting efforts.

I am hopeful that today's discussion on two draft pieces of legislation will provide us with a bipartisan road map to address several of the challenges that America's recycling efforts currently face. Challenges, but also, I think, great opportunities. What Einstein used to say, in adversity, lies opportunity, so that is what we are all about here.

One of these challenges is the availability of good data. This past November, the Environmental Protection Agency released its first-ever National Recycling Strategy. This committee provided a lot, extensive, Michael Regan, the EPA Administrator, will tell you, we provided, from the committee, significant input to the development of that National Recycling Strategy, and it reflects the bipartisan views on this subject.

The document that has been released a month or so ago by EPA offers a transformative vision for strengthening our Nation's waste management efforts, and it also highlights the need for greater standardization around data collection. To address this, Senator Boozman and I, with the help of our staffs, have developed the Recycling and Composting Accountability Act, one of the two bills that we are going to focus on today. Our bill would improve EPA's ability to gather data on our Nation's recycling systems and explore opportunities for implementing national composting strategies.

This bill is an important first step toward a national composting strategy. I hope that the experts who are here with us today, as well as other stakeholders, will support our efforts to get the ball rolling at long last.

Today, we will also focus on increasing access to recycling. Many Americans in disadvantaged communities want to recycle and compost too, but are unable to do so because they live in neighborhoods that lack curbside pickup, bottle return, and other necessary recycling infrastructure.

Senator Capito's Recycling Infrastructure and Accessibility Act would help address this by creating a pilot program at EPA to improve recycling services in underserved areas. This legislation has the potential to bring many communities into the recycling world, including those in urban and suburban areas

while also protecting our environment. I commend Senator Capito for her work and leadership on this bill, and I want to work with her and her team to make sure the bill helps jumpstart recycling in communities with the greatest need, especially those that have historically been left behind.

Both of the two bills I have mentioned are the result of true collaboration and reflect a substantial amount of bipartisan effort dedicated to exploring our Nation's recycling and composting challenges. This fall, our committee held several recycling roundtables, as some of you will recall, as well as a hearing on the importance of transitioning to a circular economy. The term circular economy is going to be something people will start hearing about, thinking about a whole lot in the days to come. It is a way of doing business that would mean less pollution from landfills and stronger, more efficient supply chains. We benefitted from the suggestions of numerous stakeholders on how Congress could collaborate with industry to bolster recycling efforts.

Fortunately, we also discovered that with awareness and motivation, we can do a great deal to address the obvious needs and change some of the damaging behavior. One product that stood out in recycling was aluminum, as many of you know. Few of us realize this, but 75 percent of aluminum, I am told, 75 percent of aluminum ever mined is still in use today. Think

about that; 75 percent of aluminum ever mined is still in use today. That is important, because aluminum products made from recycled materials use 95 percent less energy than it would take to create from first-use materials. I have to say that again. It is important, because aluminum products made from recycling materials use 95 percent less energy that it would take to create them from first-use material.

In most cases, recycled products are more energy efficient, which translates directly into reduced greenhouse gas emissions, something we all care about. That is the power of a circular economy.

As part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, which really has its roots right here from this committee last year, Congress provided unprecedented levels of funding for recycling infrastructure and educational programs. The two bills we are examining today represent our next steps to build on these efforts to turn the challenges of recycling and composting into opportunities to reduce planet-warming emissions and create good-paying jobs.

Someday, I hope to be asked by my children and grandchildren, what did you do to stop climate change and help save our planet? I want to be able to say, my generation did everything we could, everything we could. Working with Senators Capito, Boozman, and other members of this committee and our

colleagues in the Senate and the House and a lot of other stakeholders, I embrace the chance to work on a bipartisan basis to dramatically improve our recycling and composting systems in America. By doing so, we can respect our planet, preserve the precious resources that God has bestowed upon us, and I might also add, create a lot of jobs, good-paying jobs, all over the Country: in West Virginia, in Arkansas, in Delaware, in Michigan, and a whole lot of other places, too.

With that, let me turn it over to our Ranking Member and partners on these issues and so many others for her opening remarks. Also, Taylor, I understand that Taylor, not Taylor Swift, but we have some bad news from Taylor. We will miss Taylor, and we are grateful for all of her help.

[The prepared statement of Senator Carper follows:]

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO, A UNITED STATES
SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA

Senator Capito. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the witnesses for being here with us today.

A lot of what the Chairman has said in his opening statement is mirrored in my own statements as well, because this is an issue that cuts across party, and certainly is absolutely essential in this committee.

In 2021, this committee and the Congressional Recycling Caucus, which Senator Boozman is the co-chair of with Chairman Carper, they were extremely active in getting a hearing on stakeholder input on recycling policy. At that hearing, we discussed the need to expand material processing and manufacturing here in America and how a lack of demand for recycled materials is inhibiting market development, and as a result, investment in recycling infrastructure.

The week before that committee hearing, Chairman Carper and I co-hosted a roundtable called Leadership in Recycling: Sustainable Practices and Innovative Technologies, where we had the opportunity to learn about some of the technological advancements in the recycling sector directly from our industry leaders.

Later in the year, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, led by this committee, was enacted into law, establishing a

new grant program for recycling education to reduce contamination and provide a feedstock of recyclable materials. This legislation also appropriated historic amounts of funding for recycling infrastructure and education.

Today, we build on that momentum with a hearing on draft legislation to address some of the data and accessibility gaps in the sector to further improve recycling across the Country.

First, I will talk about my draft legislation, which is the Recycling Infrastructure and Accessibility Act. This legislation establishes, as the Chair said, a pilot program to improve recycling accessibility throughout the United States, with a particular emphasis on bringing recyclable services to underserved areas.

Recycling services, particularly curbside recycling, is not offered in many rural communities, like those of my home State of West Virginia. In fact, a study released last year showed that West Virginia has a recycling rate of just 2 percent when excluding cardboard, the lowest recycling rate in the States.

If you include cardboard, we don't do much better, with a recycling rate of 31 percent and a ranking of 40th in the Nation. According to the most recent recycling survey by the Department of Environmental Protection in West Virginia, of the 50 county and regional solid waste authorities, only 35 provide recycling services, and five work closely with local recyclers

or municipalities to make sure that residents have recycling options.

Together, these counties have 129 drop-off locations and 36 curbside. Of those, 14 are municipalities that have populations, we have 14 cities that have populations that exceed 10,000, and they are required to provide curbside recycling, but this is a problem.

This is a challenge not just for our State, but also other States that are represented on this committee, like Alaska and Wyoming, who face similar barriers. These rural areas share common challenges to accessibility: location and proximity to material recovery facilities and the size and density of the population. This leads to low processing yields and high collection and transportation costs, leaving materials recovery facilities struggling to operate at a profit.

According to an opinion piece on WasteDive, something I read every day, that was a little tongue-in-cheek there, a news outlet covering the industry: "It is not uncommon for a small town to put out a request for a proposal asking waste companies to bid on recycling opportunities and to not receive any bids back due to the lack of perceived profitability."

This pilot program established would provide resources to increase collection and transportation of recyclables through investments to transfer stations, for example, providing access

in those areas where a materials recovery facility may not be able to operate at a profit.

Secondly, Senator Carper, Senator Boozman, and I have collaborated on a draft bill, the Recycling and Composting Accountability Act. This bill requires EPA to collect and distribute data on recycling and composting across the Country to provide an accurate reflection of the performance both nationwide and statewide. This is information that is critical for us to be able to evaluate how we can improve and how to best inform future recycling policies.

Recycling is a win-win solution, as the Chairman says, for our environment and our economy. In this political climate, it is critical that we remember there is a lot we agree on, and we need to be diligent in identifying and pursuing those bipartisan opportunities to improve the future. That is what we are doing here today.

It is with great sadness that I announce, as the Chairman said, that I am losing a valued staff member at the end of this week, one who is here with me today, who has been absolutely integral in not only the recycling space, but other areas on the committee. Taylor Meredith will be leaving us. It is rare that you meet a person who brings as much intellect and enthusiasm, both in a personal way and a professional way, and Taylor is one of those. So I know she will succeed wherever she goes, and we

will certainly miss her and wish her all the best. So Taylor,
thank you.

[The prepared statement of Senator Capito follows:]

Senator Carper. Amen.

Senator Boozman, I oftentimes refer to our Ranking Member as my wing woman, and she refers to me sometimes as her wingman, and she has other descriptive terms as well, depending on how I am behaving. But I just want to say that you for being my wingman. I think we have been great partners leading the Recycling Caucus here in the Senate, and we have a bunch of folks on this committee that are part of that and that are not on this committee.

John, why don't you go ahead and make an opening statement?

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE JOHN BOOZMAN, A UNITED STATES SENATOR
FROM THE STATE OF ARKANSAS

Senator Boozman. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and I want to congratulate you and Senator Capito for the example that you set around here. We hear a lot about the rancor, and this and that, and we don't always agree. But I know that you two together are always trying to find common ground and find a path forward, which is so, so very important.

First, I want to thank you all very much for your attention to this important issue and for allowing us to discuss two pieces of legislation, the discussion draft of the Recycling and Composting Accountability Act that Chairman Carper and I have been working on, along with Senator Capito's Recycling Infrastructure and Accessibility Act. As the co-chair of the Senate Recycling Caucus, I understand the challenges and opportunities facing the recycling industry. It is certainly very important to me, and I know it is important to Senator Capito and Chairman Carper.

So, we do appreciate you all being here very, very much. We have a distinguished panel. When Chairman Carper and I began working on our proposal, we shared a goal of learning more about the landscape of recycling and identifying the challenges facing our Nation's recycling and composting infrastructure.

As you can imagine, the ability to recycle in Delaware and

the ability to recycle in Arkansas are different. It is important to identify these regional differences so we can properly invest our resources to fix our Nation's recycling challenges. I believe there is great opportunity to make improvements in the recycling space. I look forward to continuing to work with Chairman Carper and Ranking Member Capito so we can develop meaningful, long-term solutions that address the challenges facing the recycling industry today.

Thank you to the witnesses again for your participation and sharing your expertise. I look forward to hearing your thoughts on these two pieces of legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Senator Boozman follows:]

Senator Carper. Thank you, Senator.

Senator Stabenow, I think you are going to introduce somebody from your home State. Please proceed, thank you.

Senator Stabenow. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member. This is a really important hearing, and I am so pleased that you have picked someone who is doing a fantastic job in Michigan, as well as across the Country. It is my pleasure to introduce entrepreneur, activist, and educator, Michigan's own Pashon Murray. Welcome.

Pashon was born and raised in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and after college, she helped manage one of the city's leadership and energy and environmental design projects, which culminated in the Country's first LEED-certified YMCA. Today, Pashon is working to improve the carbon footprint of Detroit and beyond by finding solutions for everyday waste and eliminating trips to the landfill through composting.

She is the founder of Detroit Dirt, I love that name, Detroit Dirt, a revolutionary closed-loop composting company she started in 2010 that provides compost and food waste solutions to local businesses. Through her work at Detroit Dirt, Pashon is helping to build a low-carbon economy by motivating communities and industries to have a zero-waste mindset. In 2017, she expanded her impact further by establishing the Detroit Dirt Foundation, a nonprofit serving the public through

environmental education, research projects, and sustainable programs. Recently, Mr. Chairman, she was recognized as a United Nations FAO food hero.

Ms. Murray, welcome. Thank you so much for the great work you are doing in Michigan as well as across the Country. I am excited to welcome you to the committee hearing.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Carper. Senator Stabenow, thanks so much for introducing Pashon to all of us. Let me briefly introduce our other three remaining witnesses.

Rhodes Yepsen, Rhodes, raise your hand, please. Good to see you, my friend. Rhodes is the Executive Director of the Biodegradable Products Institute, where he advocates for the value of compostable packaging and its role in diverting food waste from our landfills. Welcome, Mr. Yepsen.

We are also joined by Ben Harvey. Ben is Chairman of the National Waste and Recycling Association. Ben, I think you are out there in the atmosphere, and you are joining us remotely. We are delighted that you are doing that.

Our last witness is Charles Levell Hairston, and he goes by Levell. Levell is the General Manager for Recycling and Recovered Fibers, and he is joining us today. Mr. Hairston, welcome. We are delighted to see you.

I think, with that, we are going to start off with Mr.

Yepsen. You are welcome to present your testimony when you are ready. Take it away. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF RHODES YEPSEN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BIODEGRADABLE
PRODUCTS INSTITUTE

Mr. Yepsen. Chairman Carper, Ranking Member Capito, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on these two pieces of legislation today advocating for our Nation's systems for recycling and composting. It is wonderful to see bipartisan support on these two initiatives.

As you heard, I am here on behalf of the Biodegradable Products Institute, a nonprofit that advocates for the value of certified compostable packaging in diverting organic waste to composting.

These two pieces of draft legislation complement each other very well. Starting with the Recycling and Composting Accountability Act, it will provide much-needed national-level support by attracting and quantifying the key aspects of successful recycling and composting programs. This includes the topic of access, whether that is curbside collection or drop-off, the question of processing infrastructure capabilities and capacities. It addresses end-markets for recycled material and finished compost, and it considers the important of education and labeling.

As I explain in greater detail in my written testimony, no one of these aspects on its own is sufficient for determining

the success of recycling or composting, because these are systems of interconnected stakeholders that form a value chain. This is precisely why I am so excited to be here today, as BPI focuses on systems-based thinking for compostable packaging, rather than a product-based solution, meaning the items aren't just technically compostable, but are designed to fit into food scraps collection and composting programs.

Looking at EPA's facts and figures, food is continually the number one material sent to landfills and incinerators today. The UN estimates that if food waste and loss were a country, it would be the third-largest greenhouse gas emitter in the world, after the U.S. and China. That food is often tangled in non-recyclable food-soiled packaging that makes it challenging for composters to recover. Compostable packaging enables the diversion of food scraps and associated packaging.

Groups like BioCycle Magazine have been tracking residential compost access and compost infrastructure for decades, partnering with groups like BPI on projects like FindAComposter.com to map access. The last reports from BioCycle show that over 10 million households now have access to either curbside or drop-off food scraps collection composting, a number that grows each year, but is still a fraction of our population. Of the 4,700 composting facilities around the U.S., the majority accept only yard trimmings, not food scraps or

other materials.

The U.S. Composting Council has done excellent work promoting end-markets for finished compost, such as specifications for compost in use of Department of Transportation projects. Compost use helps restore our soils, improving water retention, pest resistance, nutrients for crops, humus for conditioning the soil. These benefits have been popularized in books and documentaries like Kiss The Ground and in research and reports by the Rodale Institute.

Unlike with recycling, composting is inherently local. Neither the raw materials, largely food scraps and yard trimmings, nor the finished compost are going to be shipped internationally like recycling. The resources will be kept regionally for use in agriculture, landscaping, and other beneficial uses.

Without the type of foundational data and reporting that the Recycling and Composting Accountability Act sets out for the EPA and without grant funding for communities like that provided in the Recycling Infrastructure and Accessibility Act, we won't realistically be able to advance a national strategy to recovering products and packaging in a meaningful way, and we won't be able to realize all the benefits associated with widespread recycling and composting.

A few small points of clarification. In the Recycling and

Composting Accountability Act, we suggest amending the definition of compostable materials to include certified compostable products beyond just paper. Compostable products and packaging will increasingly be part of the solution as companies and State governments roll out commitments to making all packaging reusable, recyclable, or compostable.

In the Recycling Infrastructure and Accessibility Act, we have two comments. The first is expanding the scope to include composting, as food-soiled articles are often not readily recyclable, and again, the EPA is estimating roughly 40 percent of landfill and incinerator-bound material is made up of food, yard trimmings, and wood waste, meaning we will need composting alongside recycling to make a difference. That would also help further align the two bills.

Finally, we recommend modifying the definition of underserved to be more inclusive of urban and suburban populations. We definitely respect that distance to processing facility is important, but that it is not the only determinant for whether a community offers recycling or composting, and that there may be communities that already have recycling or composting programs, but charge an extra fee for that service, setting a barrier to participation. These funds could be used more broadly.

Thank you for putting forward two excellent legislative

proposals to improve domestic recycling and composting programs and for the opportunity to provide testimony and support. It has been an honor.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Yepsen follows:]

Senator Carper. The honor is ours. Thanks, Mr. Yepsen.
Thanks for the good work that you are doing and for joining us
today.

Pashon, you have already been introduced by Senator
Stabenow, so we will just turn it over to you to give your
statement. Please proceed.

STATEMENT OF PASHON MURRAY, FOUNDER, DETROIT DIRT

Ms. Murray. Thank you. Good morning to all of the Senators. It is an honor to be here.

First, I would just like to read a letter that I addressed, and then I will just make a couple of statements, but just for the record, I do support both bills, or legislation. I think that we are moving in a positive step, moving forward for the future for generations to come, so thank you.

Senator Carper. Thank you.

Ms. Murray. At Detroit Dirt, our mission is to create a zero-waste mindset and drive forward a low-carbon economy. The foundation of our work is in climate change adaptation in terms of food waste. This is rooted in specific actions that create movement towards carbon dioxide reductions. We must also address food loss and waste because the U.S. spends \$218 billion a year growing, processing, and transporting food that is not consumed.

At Detroit Dirt, we transport food waste from clients and process it into a high-quality compost. This impacts the environment by using food waste to its highest and best use, as a compost product for agriculture. Diverting food waste from landfills also mitigates the generation of carbon dioxide and methane.

The benefits of using compost in agriculture are many,

including increased crop yields and healthier plants. Beyond agriculture, incorporating compost into contaminated soils mitigates contaminants such as lead and other pollutants. Compost also helps increase soil's ability to hold storm water runoff, which impacts nearby lakes.

Another important part of our work is in soil erosion on agricultural lands. The rates of soil erosion and depletion exceed new soil production by billions of tons per year. The unprecedented loss of soil health and productivity has been well documented. In the U.S., there are reported to be less than 60 years of productive harvests. This speaks to the critical need to take organic materials like food waste, capture its embedded energy, and bring it back into the soils to increase the organic matter that agricultural soils must maintain.

In terms of the environmental stewardship and circular economies, we know that we must take positive steps to make changes through strong partnerships. With these partnerships, we must establish foundations to support the next generation of people who will inherit a different world. Part of our vision is to prepare them for what is to come through education so that everyone can understand their own role, especially as climate change creates an environment where changing seasons will make food production more difficult and where a changing world will take competing interests for natural resources into uncharted

territory.

Our vision is to create a thriving, sustainable enterprise where employment opportunities are available to support healthy neighborhoods and sustainable agriculture. Infrastructure for food waste management within an urban setting means reducing our overall carbon footprint, while our high visibility and community outreach will create markets for a variety of products. The new generation of powerful electric trucks manufactured in Michigan will further support our vision of transporting food waste and generating zero emissions.

The challenges of climate change mean that we must invest in innovation and creativity. While our work is measurable, we know some aspects extend far beyond those matters that are measurable or tangible. Supporting our community is a large part of our vision. We understand the value of citizenship and the responsibility of service to our community. To this end, I am in support of the legislation, the Recycling Infrastructure and Accessibility Act of 2022, as well as the Recycling and Composting Accountability Act.

I would like to add a few comments. When we speak about innovation, I, for the last 10 years, have been primarily focusing on replacing landfills and bringing education around anaerobic digestion and vessel technology and other technologies that we can actually make by-products. If we think about the

methane when we bury food waste in the landfills, that carbon not only should be recycled, but when we look at the innovation of technologies that can capture that energy and use it for heating buildings, fuel, and other by-products, this is imperative.

I believe that, across the Country and the world, we are having issues around education. If more of our people understand, in vulnerable communities that are impacted, what composting means, what recycling means, and translating science, this is the low-hanging fruit of actually impacting climate change. Because it is not just about recycling our carbon cycles. This is actually about creating manufacturing by-products that we can create markets and retail, which is something I am very excited about, so we will get into that later. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Murray follows:]

Senator Carper. Thank you for that p.s., and for joining us today, and your testimony.

Next, we are going to hear from Ben Harvey, I think, remotely. Ben Harvey, we are delighted that you can join us, and would ask you to just proceed, please. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF BENJAMIN HARVEY, PRESIDENT, E.L. HARVEY AND SONS
INCORPORATED

Mr. Harvey. Thank you. Good morning, Chairman Carper and Ranking Member Capito and members of the committee. My name is Ben Harvey, and I am President of Westborough, Massachusetts-based E.L. Harvey and Sons Inc., a full-service waste and recycling firm servicing residential, commercial, industrial, and municipal customers throughout eastern New England.

I am testifying today in my capacity as Chairman of the National Waste and Recycling Association, which represents the private sector waste and recycling industry that is essential to maintaining the quality of American life.

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

Ensuring that all Americans have access to recycling provides sustainable materials management across the Nation. Rural areas have unique challenges collecting recyclables and accessing recycling markets, leaving many communities underserved.

Recycling has become increasingly complex over the past 20 years. To manage the growing diversity of materials, material 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, today's modern MRFs are larger and service regions rather than single communities. They are 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 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 materials 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 small communities. These transfer stations are where smaller truckloads of materials are 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 and recycling tractor trailers and transfer trailers to move the material.

Hub-and-spoke systems reduce transportation and provide much-needed operational efficiency to make recycling viable for rural areas. That is why I was encouraged by the approach undertaken by Senator Capito's legislation. The private and public sector usually benefit from a model where public sector can efficiently collect materials from rural areas and transfer them to privately-operated MRFs for processing. Privately operated MRFs typically share revenues from the sale of the processed recyclables with the communities that bring the materials to them. We wholeheartedly support a program where rural communities can access the global recycling markets.

Whatever we do needs to be undergirded with good data. Recycling, composting, and waste composition has changed significantly over time. 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 where it was 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 landfills, and disposal of clothing has doubled over the last 20 years. As a businessman, it is important for me to be able to make decisions founded on good data. That is why I am also

pleased to support the Recycling and Composting Accountability Act that empowers 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.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Harvey follows:]

Senator Carper. Mr. Harvey, thank you so much. I know that Senator Capito also appreciates your testimony and your presence. Thanks for joining us remotely.

Batting cleanup, Mr. Levell Hairston, I am going to ask you to go ahead and give us your opening statement. Levell, thanks so much for coming.

STATEMENT OF CHARLES LEVELL HAIRSTON, VICE PRESIDENT AND GENERAL
MANAGER FOR RECYCLING AND RECOVERED FIBER, INTERNATIONAL PAPER

Mr. Hairston. Thank you, Chairman Carper, Ranking Member Capito, and Senator Boozman, and distinguished members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Levell Hairston, and I am the Vice President and General Manager of Recycling for International Paper.

We are a leading global supplier of renewable, fiber-based products, which includes corrugated packaging products and pulp for diapers, tissue, and other personal care products. We are headquartered in Memphis, Tennessee and employ approximately 27,000 colleagues in the U.S.

In our business, recovered fiber refers to paper and fiber-based packaging products that have served their primary purpose and are now ready to be collected and recycled. In addition to manufacturing, International Paper recovers more than seven million tons of recovered fiber annually.

In 2020, International Paper released a Vision 2030 goal, which demonstrated our commitments to building a better future for people, the planet, and the company. These strict goals are detailed in my written statement.

As a company that truly embraces the concept of a circular economy, our renewable solution goal includes a target to create innovative products that are 100 percent reusable, recyclable,

or compostable, a metric designed to accelerate the transition to a low-carbon economy throughout the company's value chain.

I am pleased to share our support of the Recycling and Composting Accountability Act and the Recycling Infrastructure and Accessibility Act today, and to add some insights into International Paper's recycling business and the papers industry's commitment to circularity and sustainable practices.

End-markets for recovered paper products are strong, thanks to the significant private investments by our industry over the past decades and established value chain of our customers. We support market-based approaches, like the provisions in these two bills to improve the Nation's recycling system.

The paper industry is a leader in recycling. According to the EPA, by weight, more paper is recovered for recycling from municipal waste streams than plastic, glass, steel, and aluminum. Paper recycling rates have continuously grown over recent decades and remain consistently high, at or above 63 percent since 2009.

In 2020, nearly 66 percent of the paper and 89 percent of the corrugated boxes were recycled. The paper industry has planned or announced approximately \$5 billion in manufacturing infrastructure investments by the end of 2023 to continue to best use of recycled fiber in our products. These investments will help increase the amount of recovered paper used by U.S.

paper and paperboard mills by approximately eight million tons, which would represent about a 25 percent increase in U.S. recovered paper consumption over the 2020 levels.

Legislation like the Recycling and Composting Accountability Act would help companies like International Paper reach our goals. As a data-driven company, we understand to improve something, you must be able to measure it. International Paper proudly developed these goals and it will take resources, like in this bill's data finding to help us achieve them.

Our industry prioritizes data collection to improve recycling rates. The American Forest and Paper Association has completed two key data projects in the last year. This includes AF&PA's Access to Recycling Study, which found that 94 percent of Americans have access to community paper or paperboard recycling programs. The study also finds that 79 percent of Americans now have access to curbside residential recycling programs, making it easier for them to recycle at home. This represents an increase of more than 14 million people since the 2014 study was done.

Second, last year, AF&PA released a design guidance for recyclability. The guide provides data for packaging designers and consumer brands to better understand how non-fiber elements such as coatings and additives impact the recyclability of

paper-based packaging. This is another example of our industry's commitment to circularity.

We appreciate that Senator Boozman's and Chairman Carper's bill supports EPA's national recycling strategy and acknowledges that industrial efforts are part of the circular economy. We strongly support the provision that require EPA to conduct a study of recyclable materials in commercial and municipal waste streams that, for the previous 10 years, were diverted from the circular market. We believe studies like this will highlight the strong recycling rates of the paper industry, and it will also help identify that we are close to a practical maximum and that more regulation is not needed to be able to increase paper recycling rates.

Senator Capito's bill to help increase recovered materials used by industries and access to communities without MRFs, or material recovery facilities, is also important. Without clean material, for us, it is hard for us to serve the needs of both the growing e-commerce and customer needs for our essential businesses.

Again, I just want to say thank you for the opportunity.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Hairston follows:]

Senator Carper. Thanks very much for your testimony, Levell.

Let me ask a couple of questions, and then I will yield to Senator Capito. She will be followed by Senator Whitehouse, Senator Boozman, and Senator Stabenow, and then by others as they join us, remotely or in person.

Question to start off with, Rhodes Yepsen. Mr. Yepsen, with respect to curbside composting data, you mentioned in your testimony that your organization has been working on tracking residential composting programs, I think you said, for nearly a decade. Yet, significant data gaps remain. How would a study of curbside programs at the federal level help eliminate existing data gaps and arm communities with the information they need to set up successful composting programs? Please proceed.

Mr. Yepsen. Yes, thank you for that question. I was fortunate early in my career to work with BioCycle Magazine on some of that data tracking for residential curbside composting programs, and yes, while I have been working on it for a little over a decade, BioCycle has been at it for many decades. I think what I would like to highlight is that, as we heard earlier from Senator Capito, there are a lot of trade publications; WasteDive is one of them.

So, part of the challenge is in collecting the data, and part of it is how does that information get out to the public.

As a publication, BioCycle does wonderful investigative journalism, contacting States and municipalities to get that data collected, collate it, and then report back out on it.

However, there is a big distinction between that and what we see with something like the EPA facts and figures. Those reports are incredibly important for standardizing the type of data that is collected and for getting that information out to the wider public. So I think that is the main thing that I would highlight, that is how this would help fill that data gap.

Senator Carper. Okay, thank you very much.

Next question to Ms. Murray. This question is with respect to the national composting strategy and carbon reduction. As I mentioned, my wife and I are avid home composters and have been for some time. I am deeply interested in the role that reducing our food waste could play in conserving space in our landfills and reducing the harmful methane emissions that contribute to climate change.

Delaware is not a big State. We are about 100 miles from north to south, about 50 miles from east to west, and we need all the land we have. We have got about a million people, so we don't need to create more and more space for a lot of landfills. We need to figure out how to compost and recycle.

I think that this is an issue of social justice as well, as 30 to 40 percent of our Nation's food supply is wasted, while

nearly 14 million Americans, many of whom are children, experience food insecurity. With these potential benefits in mind, the Recycling and Composting Accountability Act would direct the Environmental Protection Agency to conduct a study on the capability of the United States to implement a national residential composting strategy. The question is this: what do you see as the potential benefits of creating a national composting strategy?

Ms. Murray. Thank you, Senator, for that question. I have been waiting for years to have someone address these issues.

Senator Carper. The wait is over.

Ms. Murray. Hallelujah.

Senator Carper. The day has come.

[Laughter.]

Ms. Murray. And it being bipartisan, this is amazing.

First, I would like to say that if we really break the waste stream down and look at the economics of what the waste stream really is and the value of how much we are burying in landfills, that should actually create a red flag right there, because there is over \$200 billion of food waste being wasted annually in this Country alone. So first of all, we need to make sure that the education and the awareness around this is just very crucial and imperative.

But it is the byproducts that can be made from this. In

the past history, people have been interested in the tipping fees and creating sites where they are looking at the front end of how much money they can make by discarding the waste, but it is not waste. It is a resource. Composting is actually healthy for soils, for our landscapes, our urban landscapes, for water runoff, et cetera.

We have to look at the market and actually, on a national level, of creating retail and wholesale markets around this product as well. When you walk into a Home Depot or a grocery store, you have all these chemical fertilizers and chemical-based products that we have to replace. There is no need to do that. We have the technology to actually create byproducts that can replace those chemical-based products.

It is also healthy for not just the environment, but also we are looking at the economic benefit of that. I also would like to say that the more access we have to sites, whether they are boutique sites of two to three acres or a larger composting site, we have to look at the energy embedded in this, as well. When you truck compost or waste 30, 40 miles outside of the city, that is a lot of energy wasted. When you create a closed-loop cycle or a closed-loop market within an urban community or a rural community, you are actually keeping those products within that circular economy, which is a great benefit. So we are looking at social, economic, and environmental impacts.

The key here is, at Detroit Dirt, we wanted to be able to display the fact that we could take manure from the zoo, food waste from automotive communities, and keep that product right in the community for urban farming, for people to purchase, but also reducing emissions. So I think a national campaign around education and implementing these practices and doing away with antiquated practices is key. We have technologies, weather-permitting, whatever region we are in, to actually divert that waste and create byproducts from that.

So I think we have to look at the energy embedded in that. We also have to look at, you know, creating the circular economy or local economy and the benefits. But I think on a national level, if we can look at a few factors here, making sure that we have education and awareness for the general public. Creating curriculum for K-12 schools, we are doing that in Michigan right now. I think that that is crucial when our youth and younger students can see themselves playing a role in this. That is key because they can take that home to their households.

But I also think that when we start building these new markets to pinpoint what products we can replace that are on the market that is doing more harm, but also, when we are looking at reducing or omitting emissions, that is something, to me, from a moral and just ethical standpoint is key. So, I think, at the end of the day, socially, economically, and environmentally, we

are taking a step forward in a positive direction.

Senator Carper. Great. Thank you. Thanks for all of that. You read my mind. I had one more question I was going to ask you, and you have answered it without it being asked, so thank you for that.

Now, it is Senator Capito's turn. She will be followed by Senator Whitehouse. Senator Capito?

Senator Capito. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank all of you for being here again.

I have a question for Mr. Harvey. Your family's company operates and provides recycling services in rural areas in New England. Can you explain why certain regions within New England have the infrastructure, geography, or special characteristics that enable curbside recycling, and why other areas in that region may not have that?

Mr. Harvey. It comes down to the density of the municipality that we operate in. Our industry is all about density, and it is all about volume. We need to be able to send our trucks out in a dense area, and we need to collect the recyclables or the trash in one truck and bring it back to a central location. We want volume. So when you have a highly populated area, it is much easier to do curbside recycling.

When you get into rural areas, even in the State of Massachusetts or in New England when you go up into northern New

England, it is so much harder to send that truck out and collect the material. We send two trucks out a lot of times. What the industry has started to do is to start to use what we call split bodies, so we are only sending one truck out at a time to do it.

But even in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts where we operate, we have feeder transfer stations that feed into our MRF in central Massachusetts. We need those. We need those feeder systems to come in and make it profitable for us to run our MRFs.

So we run into the same aspects, not quite as rural as West Virginia or Oklahoma or some of the other States, but that is the biggest reason. It is density.

Senator Capito. Right. Well, so, investments, you mentioned, and I think you have already answered this, in transportation and other mechanisms for increasing collection and transportation would be long-term solutions for rural, do you think those would be long-term solutions for our rural communities, then?

Mr. Harvey. Definitely, it would be, yes. Yes.

Senator Capito. Okay, so our previous witness, Ms. Murray, was talking about a circular economy, so if you were looking at a transfer station system, such as you have, would you consider that a circular economy way of dealing with recycling?

Mr. Harvey. I think the circular economy goes from the

collection to the processing to the marketing and then turning it back into another product. So, collection and the processing are only one half of that or one part of that. We still need the outlets for the materials. We still need to establish good, solid markets, which we have worked hard for years to establish those.

We need to be able to collect the materials, but at the end of the day, we need to be able to ship them out to consumers, wherever they may be, domestically or export, wherever that market is. We need to do that to close the whole loop.

Senator Capito. Are those markets increasing for you now, or are they static? What is the state of the aftermarket, after it has been processed?

Mr. Harvey. That is a very good question. We have certainly had some issues when China stopped accepting a lot of our recyclable materials. We have been very fortunate since that time that our domestic mills have picked up the need for more materials. You heard the gentleman from IP say about all the tons that they handle.

So, yes, the markets right now are actually pretty robust. They have fallen off a little bit from where they were at the end of calendar 2021, but they are still fairly robust. Another reason why we need to get into these areas that are underserved and collect those recyclables is because there is a need and a

desire to use those materials currently.

Senator Capito. Right.

Senator Carper. Senator Capito, can I interrupt for just one moment?

Senator Capito. Oh, sure.

Senator Carper. We all serve on different committees. Some of them are in session right now. I am being summoned to come to the Homeland Security Committee for a business meeting. They need my vote, so I am going to slip away for a while.

Senator Capito. [Presiding.] So you just need to recycle back over here. I got that one in before you could.

[Laughter.]

Senator Capito. Thank you. Just a quick question for Mr. Hairston on the data collection. The most recent Recycling Economic Report from EPA was released in November 2020, but it was relying on eight-year-old data from 2012. I know in my own community, the ebbs and flows of recycling have been very apparent, a lot of it depending on the age of the facility that can recycle, the will of the municipal government, the available funds, the participation of the residents, all kinds of things. If this legislation were to become law and approve EPA's recycling data, what insights do you think we would be able to gain from analyzing this data?

Mr. Hairston. Thanks, Senator. When we think about the

data, again, when you think about the forest products industry and you think about what we do, we have a very strong and historical track record of investing in this infrastructure. We do a great job of collecting that product and bringing it back.

The opportunity for us is how to make sure we are accessing all the fiber available. So when I think about this study and what it will do is, even the data that we do as AF&PA is a sample. The data that EPA will be able to do will give us a more detailed view of the Country and the breakdown and truly be able to identify where those opportunities are to be able to collect that fiber, collect those recyclable materials and get them back to some end use to make a new product. I see the data as being very valuable in helping both public and private sectors understand where the opportunities are to drive a circular economy.

Senator Capito. Thank you.

Senator Whitehouse?

Senator Whitehouse. Thank you, Chairman. Thank you, everyone, for being here.

It strikes me that we have slightly different recycling markets for newsprint, for paper, for glass, for compost, and for plastics. I would like to focus on plastics, because I think we have a real failure happening in the plastics recycling market.

In theory, this should be a pretty vibrant market because we are seeing immense public pressure on the plastics industry to clean up its act, particularly in regard to waste that ends up in the oceans and in our rivers. We are seeing, frankly, outright bans on certain single-use plastics, sending what you would think would be a strong message to the industry to clean up its act.

There is considerable reputational risk for these companies as the propagators of the material that ends up around some turtle's neck in the sea somewhere. So you would think that the conditions would be about as good as they can be for a corporate response with respect to recycling plastic instead of just churning out new plastic.

In fact, the numbers tell a completely different story. If you look at single-use plastic, which is the stuff most likely to end up in the ocean, in a whale's belly, tangled around a coral reef, the industry, by my information, has managed to achieve a grand 2 percent recycling component for single-use plastics, 2 percent. I mean, that is probably the number you would get by accident. Under all that pressure, the best they can do is 2 percent.

So, something needs to change if this is going to get serious. Everything tells me that the reason industry is still at 2 percent, despite all this pressure, is that the real

decision driver is dollars, and it is cheaper to buy new nurdles of plastic and put out your single-use plastic items than it is to buy recycled plastic. Therefore, the industry spurns recycled plastic, despite all that public pressure, because of the pressure of cost.

So, it seems to me, that is a really simple gateway to a solution to the problem to get us above 2 percent. If you look at it at our blue bins, I have blue bins that we fill with recycling. The record that I think we have on actual recycling, when an American goes to their blue bin and takes the soda bottles and the plastic waste from their household and actually puts it in the blue bin, is less than 10 percent.

Most likely, 6 to 8 percent of that actually gets recycled. More than 90 percent of it doesn't actually get recycled. It is almost the level of being a scam on the consumers who, in good faith, are putting their plastics in those blue bins and aren't being told that the industry isn't recycling that stuff. A lot of it is simply being packed up and put into the dump. A lot of it is simply being packed up and shipped overseas to be put into open-air dumps and end up in the rivers and end up in the oceans and go on from there.

The responsibility of the industry for getting above 2 percent in terms of recycled content for single-use plastics and for doing better than having more than 90 percent of what we

actually put into those blue recycling bins be recycled ought to be a lot higher. They ought to be accountable for those, I would say, catastrophic failures verging on being a fraud on the public.

So, I am hoping that we can work together not just to measure the disastrous state of plastics recycling, but to solve it. I would really appreciate it if each of the witnesses would take a minute when this hearing is over, and take this as a question for the record and give me your ideas and suggestions as to what needs to be done to solve this dilemma of total plastics recycling failure that we are stuck in. I think it is purely cost, and I think if you are not going to put any kind of a price on dumping the plastic, any kind of a price on any type of an equivalence for recycled plastic versus new plastic, we are just never, ever, ever going to solve this.

We can talk our way around this problem forever, but the dollars drive the decisions, in my view. I would like your response to that, if you don't mind putting it in writing, so that I don't take up more time in the hearing. I appreciate it. Thank you.

Senator Capito. Thank you, Senator Whitehouse.

Senator Boozman?

Senator Boozman. Thank you.

Mr. Hairston, Arkansas is proud to have two major companies

willing to set voluntary sustainability goals. Walmart set a goal to achieve zero waste in their operations and reach 100 percent recyclable, reusable, or industrial compostable private brand packaging by 2025, while Tyson Foods' transition from virgin fiber paperboard to 100 percent post-consumer recycled content across their Jimmy Dean brand and launch zero waste to landfill pilot programs at three production facilities, diverting nearly 5.2 million pounds of waste from their landfills, which was a 60 percent increase from the previous year.

Mr. Hairston, how will the Recycling and Composting Accountability Act help companies like Walmart, Tyson Foods, others that are working hard in this area as they try and meet their needs?

Mr. Hairston. Thanks for the question, Senator. Again, I go back to your companies that you referenced. Just like International Paper, we have some pretty strict goals out there, and we believe that we can achieve those goals. One of the challenges and opportunities as we try to get there is understanding what is impacting circularity. The first piece is, you want to be able to have packaging or a material that is circular, meaning that it is recyclable, it is reusable, or it is compostable. Once we do that, the next question has to be, is it coming back around?

The thing that this Act is going to do for us, it is going to help identify and help point out clarity, where the gaps are, so that we can take responsible actions with our private and public partners to be able to figure out how to continue to drive towards that 100 percent goal.

Senator Boozman. Very good. Mr. Hairston, oftentimes, companies implement sustainability programs because it fits within their mission statement or core beliefs. But sometimes companies develop innovative sustainability practices because it makes economic sense to do so.

Can you give some examples of the private sector investing in sustainability practices to protect the environment while also helping their bottom line? This is really what Senator Whitehouse was alluding to, and it is very, very important.

Mr. Hairston. Yes, I think it is definitely a good question, and I think you are always able to meet that momentum and drive when you can figure out a way to have both an economic and social solution.

At International Paper, we are integrating our sustainability goals and targets into our strategy, into our capital plan, and operating plans. This will ensure that we create that long-term value for our shareholders, and we operate a business that drives and delivers a sustainable outcome.

We are not afraid to innovate in this space to meet the

market demands and to advance the vision to build a better future for both the people, the planet, and our company. A recent service that we developed that meets this triple bottom line, people, planet, and profit, is a system that we call eBOSS. eBOSS is a service that we provide to our customers. My service focuses on analyzing the customer needs and being able to understand their shipping history and box utilization to then suggest to them the right size box to one, reduce their cost for packaging, and two, ensure that they have a solution that is recyclable or reusable.

Those are some ways that, again, we are able to one, meet our goals of sustainability and a circular market, and at the same time, being able to help reduce costs and drive economic benefits for the companies that we are working with.

Senator Boozman. Right. As you allude to, paper recycling rates are one of the great success stories within the industry, with an approximate 66 percent recycling rate, and 94 percent of Americans having access to community paper recycling programs. Additionally, 80 percent of the U.S. population has access to community recycling programs that accept pizza boxes.

What are some lessons other commodities could learn from the paper industry to improve their rates, again, going back to the very important question that Senator Whitehouse raised?

Mr. Hairston. Yes, again, I think it continues to go back

to, we believe in producer responsibility, and we continue to show our commitment with our investments over our last three decades. As we continue to meet the needs of our customers, working together as an industry is important.

The pizza box recyclability was a concern that, as an industry, we put our heads together and said, how can we resolve that issue? What is a concern that is out there, and how can we manage that in a way that can truly allow that box to be recycled? I think that collaborative effort is the way that you improve. That has worked well for the forest products industry, and I think it is something that other industries should look at if they are having difficulties.

Senator Boozman. Very good. Thank you.

Senator Capito. Thank you.

Senator Stabenow?

Senator Stabenow. Thank you very much, and thank you to all of our witnesses today.

Ms. Murray, in the 2018 Farm Bill, I championed the Composting and Food Waste Reduction pilot project under the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovation Production. I am so glad to see the work that you are doing in Michigan and in Detroit. Working with my partner, Senator Boozman, I am looking forward to building on that work in the next Farm Bill and focusing on supporting composting activities and decreasing food

waste.

What types of barriers has Detroit Dirt faced in its efforts to transport food waste and process it into compost?

Ms. Murray. Thank you, Senator, for that question. Some of the barriers have been, well, there are multiple barriers, but over the years, we have experienced transportation from food banks to homeless shelters and folks that could actually use the food. At first, it was an insurance issue. A lot of people were concerned about insurance. But with stadiums, restaurants, and any type of manufacture of food, a lot of times, that excess food is getting dumped into landfills or burned in incinerators, because they don't have enough companies to actually transport that excess material.

So I think there is an opportunity to build on that and have more companies that are transporting and logistics to help fill those voids.

Some of the other challenges have been with education. We have simply, we feel like we have to go above and beyond with education. Because the municipalities, I think, at times, what happens is we focus on food waste, but we look past other low-hanging fruit, such as yard waste, and the municipalities actually can buy back, when I speak about the circular economy, and we talk about markets, some of the municipalities on a State and as well as local level can purchase that product back. They

are already buying supplies or materials or resources from other sources. They can buy back compost and process yard waste as well. So we have to look at those barriers.

I just think it is a matter of bridging the gap and understanding what the byproducts are and the value.

At General Motors, when we ran a pilot with the Detroit Zoo and General Motors and Blue Cross Blue Shield, they bought a lot of the compost back for their landscape, and they weren't really thinking about that. But landscapers and other municipalities with yard waste and food waste or other products, but I think the other challenge is just making sure that people understand what food waste is, because they get a little bit scared about the ick factor of it. That is why I think that education is the key, bringing awareness, so they understand how to compost.

Senator Stabenow. Right. Thank you so much. This is an exciting area, I think, for all of us to be working in.

Let me ask, Mr. Hairston, you mentioned in your testimony, and Senator Boozman indicated as well, that the 2020 paper recycling rate was just about 66 percent, 65.7 percent. That is really amazing. I also want to agree with Senator Whitehouse that plastics recycling is woefully inadequate.

So, I really appreciate overall what the industry has done. Your industry has recovered more than 47 million tons of paper for recycling. But even with those impressive numbers, I know

you are pushing to go even higher, which is very important. With that in mind, I introduce the PAPER Act that prevents waste energy facilities from earning a tax credit for burning recyclable paper.

Could you talk about the importance of recovered fibers to your company and whether eliminating a tax incentive for burning paper would increase the recycling opportunities for the paper industry?

Mr. Hairston. Thanks, Senator. International Paper supports the PAPER Act. The bill will help ensure that the federal production tax credit protects the integrity of recovered fiber stream so that paper recycling can continue to be an environmental success story.

When we think about the recycling and general recycling, it has been able to take something that has completed its primary use and be able to collect that and reuse it in a similar fashion going forward. We do think that, again, being able to do that in the paper industry, we have shown that that is important.

One thing that I said in my opening statement is \$5 billion of investment, eight million tons increase, that is going to happen. We are going to need that fiber. So being able to have all the fiber available to support that industry, support sustainable packaging for the customers, is going to be

important to drive the circular economy going forward.

Senator Stabenow. Thank you very much. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Senator Capito. Thank you. Well, for our witnesses, I am going to ask a few more questions in anticipation of our Chairman coming back in. I see Senator Kelly, so we will wait just a second. If you are ready, Senator Kelly, or I can ask a question.

Senator Kelly. Ready to go.

Senator Capito. Ready to go. Just like a good astronaut would be. Thank you. Sorry to rush you, there.

Senator Kelly. [Presiding.] Thank you, Madam Chairwoman, and thank you for holding this hearing today.

This question is for Mr. Harvey, who I believe is remote. Mr. Harvey, I appreciated that you took time in your testimony to discuss the unique challenges rural communities face when establishing and sustaining recycling programs. I appreciate that both of the bills we are discussing today take steps to address these challenges.

Many rural communities want to offer curbside recycling programs, but in recent years, it has gotten increasingly challenging for these programs to make financial sense. For example, in 2019 the city of Sierra Vista in Arizona was forced to end their curbside recycling program because they had to ship

their recyclables nearly 200 miles to Phoenix, and then the numbers, the math, the financials on this just didn't add up. In the past three years, seven cities in Arizona have ended curbside recycling.

Mr. Harvey, can you expand upon your testimony about the costs that rural and disadvantaged communities face when they must choose whether to ship recyclables tens or hundreds of miles to the nearest processing facility or to end recycling programs? What can the Federal Government do to support recycling in rural areas?

Mr. Harvey. Thank you. I think what the biggest issue facing us is certainly the cost to collect, transport, and process.

When we ran into this situation where China was not accepting any of our material, the recycling markets throughout the world collapsed. They went negative on us. There was no value for the materials that we were collecting.

So we had to institute, in a lot of cases, we instituted processing costs at our MRFs, where before, we didn't have to do that because the value of those recyclables after we process them covered that. It doesn't matter what materials that you put it a truck; it costs money to send that down the road. It costs money to buy special trucks to collect the recyclables. It costs money to buy the tractor trailers to transport now from

a satellite facility to a MRF. It costs to process that material, and then it costs to ship it out to the consuming mills.

So all of those costs can add up significantly, depending on what part of the Country that you are in. That is why I think you are facing these issues right now. As we start to get into a more robust marketplace with recyclables, hopefully we will see some of those costs come down, and I think that this is where we need the support of the Federal Government to come in and subsidize, maybe, in some of these situations where it is costing a municipality too much money to transport and process those recyclables.

Senator Kelly. Mr. Harvey, what within the market could change to result in a more robust market for recyclables?

Mr. Harvey. I guess the easy answer to that would be a guaranteed price for what we get paid for the materials that we process. But it doesn't. It fluctuates. It is a very supply and demand basis, and it fluctuates on that supply and demand.

If we knew that every day for the next 10 years, we were going to receive a certain threshold of price for the materials, then at least we would know what we have. But we have to be able to adapt to that pricing and make changes in our systems to adapt to that pricing.

Senator Kelly. Is the only way for that to happen is that

there needs to be some support from the Federal Government, or is there another free-market scenario where that could come to pass?

Mr. Harvey. I don't see anything happening in the free marketplace, and I am a free marketplace guy. I built my business; I have been doing this for 50 years, and we have ridden it up and we have ridden it down, and I believe in the free marketplace, but there is no guarantee in the free marketplace. So that is the only issue that we deal with.

Senator Kelly. Thank you, Mr. Harvey.

If the Senator from Alaska is ready -- I have one more question. I will go over the time, unless you are ready right now.

Senator Sullivan. No, go ahead.

Senator Kelly. All right. This question is for Mr. Yepsen. One of the biggest challenges recycling programs face right now is finding end markets for recyclable materials and finished compost. In fact, one of the leading challenges I hear from communities in Arizona who are struggling to maintain recycling programs or beginning composting programs is that it is costly to find buyers willing to take a finished product. That is why I appreciate the Recycling and Composting Accountability Act, which takes the first steps to address this problem through a comprehensive study on the end markets for

recyclable and composted materials.

Mr. Yepsen, can you expand upon why this study could be so groundbreaking, and has anything like this been done before?

Mr. Yepsen. I do think it would be groundbreaking. There has been some research done on end markets for finished compost. The U.S. Composting Council has published reports on this and really advocates for different markets, and has case studies around use for things like the Department of Transportation, which has really helped spec compost into Department of Transportation projects.

I think, as we heard also earlier from Pashon, we see more and more efforts from whether that is a business or a community that is trying to divert their food scraps and yard trimmings to compost, also committing to buying that back. So we know that whether it is a corporate campus that has a composting program and has grounds, or a municipality that has landscaping needs.

I think that having a federal-level tracking of this would be really helpful, because I think it is oftentimes just that composting is so new that a lot of communities don't have an understanding of just how many varieties of avenues that that finished compost could be used in.

Senator Kelly. How many communities nationwide actually have composting programs? Do you know by percentage?

Mr. Yepsen. For yard trimmings composting, the number is

fairly large, but it is seasonal in most places for yard trimmings collection. So there are around 4,700 composting facilities taking yard trimmings. But the number is much smaller when it comes to food scraps composting and really robust curbside programs, and that is less than 10 percent of the population.

Senator Kelly. Thank you.

The Senator from Alaska?

Senator Sullivan. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank the witnesses for being here today.

This is an area that actually has a lot of bipartisan support. When you are helping us think through solutions, I want you to try and help us think through what would be bipartisan solutions.

Let me give you an example. Senator Whitehouse, I know, has already asked some questions about plastics. You may have seen, he and I have been putting forward legislation that has been very strongly supported. The Save Our Seas Act, the Save Our Seas 2.0 Act have all been passed and signed into law, and now we are working on implementations.

Let me ask Mr. Harvey and Mr. Hairston. Give me your thoughts, quickly, particularly really following up on Senator Whitehouse's question earlier about plastics and what you see as a bipartisan approach. You think you guys have a sense of what

that would be? I am not looking for big, top-down mandates and taxes, but there are other things that I think can achieve a lot of broad-based support here on an issue that, in many ways, is a uniting issue. The oceans clean-up, ocean plastic issue certainly is one here in the Senate.

Do you have any thoughts on those, in terms of plastics in particular? Mr. Hairston, we will start with you.

Mr. Hairston. Yes, thanks, Senator, for the question. I spoke to it a little earlier. As we think about addressing those issues, I think coming from a fiber-based industry, and what have we done, and what are the things that have been successful for us. We believe, one, honestly, that the producers have a responsibility. Over our three decades, we have been focusing on infrastructure investments to help drive that piece. The recycling rate for cardboard continues to be high.

Senator Sullivan. Why is that high, and it is not high in other areas? Do you guys know, or have a sense?

Mr. Hairston. I can't speak to what is driving the economics of plastic. I can speak to the things that we see in the fiber-based, where we have a local commodity that is collected that has global demand, and we have been able to leverage that to provide sustainable, fiber-based packaging for our customers. And we think that that continues as an

opportunity. Exactly what is the problem with plastic, I can't speak to. I don't feel comfortable speaking to it at this time.

Senator Sullivan. Okay. Mr. Harvey, do you have a sense on the questions that I posed?

Mr. Harvey. So, I am having just a little bit of trouble hearing, but you are talking about plastics, and a solution. From our standpoint, we are kind of like, in the middle. We don't manufacture it, and we don't use it. We just kind of pick it up and process it.

But I will tell you, in all my years of doing this, there has been a tremendous amount of confusion on what is and isn't recyclable and the different types of resins that are available. It is very, very difficult when these manufacturers keep coming out with new products and a different resin that looks the same as maybe something else [audio gap] sorted it and our opticals can't, either.

So again, I think a lot of what will happen, I think this accessibility that we need to get into these rural areas is going to help that. If we can collect those materials and not dispose of them or throw them out the window of a car or throw them into a creek that now it ends up in the ocean, it is the accessibility and it is going after these robust programs and getting them working.

Senator Sullivan. Great. Let me ask a follow-up question,

Ms. Murray, maybe you can lead off on it. It relates to what Mr. Harvey just mentioned, and then if anyone else wants to jump in.

My State is a very big State in terms of size, but a pretty small population, so about 70 percent of the households do not have access to curbside recycling. So, how do you bring recycling infrastructure to many parts of the Country that don't have it, particularly big, rural, spread-out parts with limited or spread-out populations? Then related, I think it is related, does the answer to that questions also have something to do with to what degree you think the emphasis should be on local government initiatives versus kind of big, fed top-down? In Alaska, we often say, hey, one size does not fit all. Federal Government comes up with some plan, and we are usually the State that it doesn't work in. So that is a secondary question, but I think it is related to the first question.

Ms. Murray. Yes, thank you, Senator. That is an excellent question. I am a strong believer in local policies and ordinances, simply because those mandates will give you benchmarks that are going to produce the data. It simply lets you know who is and what neighborhoods are doing what. Municipalities have resources, as well. They have yard waste and other things that these households can actually use.

So if we are creating ordinances around a circular economy

where it says, okay, if you are going to utilize, depending on what region and where you are, your yard waste clippings, as well as your food waste, those are byproducts that we can actually manufacture and distribute back to landscapers or others who need it for tree planting, for water runoff, and other necessary needs too, as well as soil remediation.

I am in an industrial city, so we are always looking to remediate soils for brownfields and other issues that we face. So I think education is key. Making sure households understand the difference between carbon.

In our composting world, you have the greens, right? All the decomposable food waste and spent grain from breweries, food waste from restaurants, manufacturers. But then you have the browns: the cardboards, the leaves. You have to process these things in a certain way that makes sense.

I think with education, that makes it simple for most residents to understand that. So I think the Federal Government, as well as local, should be working together, depending on what region you are in in the Country. Because these are all processes that can be done.

But there are also technologies if you are in Alaska or Michigan, where, weather permitting, you have a bunch of snow, if you have these closed facilities with in-vessel, anaerobic digestion, certain technologies that can take that material, you

can produce and accelerate the process easier. But we really don't have these facilities set up around the Country, as much as we should. I think that investment in infrastructure is going to be huge to accelerate that.

That is really what we need to be able to do, is to sort and separate that waste stream so we know what the value is. Also not just MRFs, but there has to be composting facilities as well as recycling facilities. I think that that is something that we are sleeping on. A lot of people talk about transfer stations, but they are not looking at actually taking certain technologies that exist in Denmark and Germany and other places around that world that can replace the landfill. It is happening.

So I hope that I answered your question, because education is the key in households. But also mandates and ordinances with the local government are going to be key. I have seen Detroit slow-walk this thing for years for the last decade, and then last year, the education and the investment in education and having the people understand what these processes are has accelerated the process, especially with K-12 schools and universities taking that home to those households, as well.

Senator Sullivan. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Boozman. [Presiding.] Thank you.

Mr. Hairston, in the last 10 years, and especially in the

last two years, we have seen a rise in total online retail sales, which means an increased demand for paper packaging. To meet the demand, it has been vital to have as much recovered fiber in the circular market as possible.

How has the paper industry's investment into research helped you prepare for the upswing in e-commerce we are seeing right now?

Mr. Hairston. Thanks, Senator. The data that the Act will provide is really going to give us more detail on where e-commerce sales and that packaging material is available to be recovered. One of the things that we have talked about, historically, recycling has been a percentage of residential, a percentage of commercial. As we see the e-commerce shift, we are seeing a lot more of the recycling of fiber-based products coming through the residential stream. Understanding that stream, understanding what is available to be recovered, will allow our industry to continue to invest in the right infrastructure and support to be able to drive the circular economy and get that commodity back into the value stream.

Senator Boozman. Very good. The rest of the panel, anybody who wants to jump in, in regard to the Recycling Infrastructure and Accessibility Act, what type of projects do you expect to be completed should this program be enacted?

Mr. Yepsen. Building off of this question about how you

make sure that we have solutions that fit the wide variety of States, whether that is rural, urban, or suburban environments, I think that what I would be really hoping is, I think, connected to that rural environment. For composting, we have seen a lot of success for drop-off programs for food scraps composting in more rural States. I know, maybe not as large as Alaska, but in Vermont and in Wisconsin, they have had successful drop-off programs for composting where curbside isn't available, so I think that would be one indicator of success.

Senator Boozman. Anybody else?

Mr. Harvey. I just would add to that, that we would look for these programs to give us a source of more material to process and get that material, collect all that material, and get it into something where we have a package, a bundle, a whatever, that the end users can use. That is basically what we are looking at today, is to try to get the recycling rate up in not only rural America, but all of America, get the whole nationwide recycling rate up. Let's use these resources that we have in front of us and turn them into another product or into the same product.

Ms. Murray. Hopefully, Senator, we will be able to see more mandates around banning food waste from going to the landfills. I am a little aggressive with this, because I have been involved for the last 12 or 13 years of my life. I have

seen places like States like Massachusetts and California, different pockets who have aggressively mandated the banning of food waste going to the landfill or being burned in the incinerator to begin with.

But I also think the investment in creating these sites with the right equipment and technology is going to be key. So I think we are going to see a lot of excitement around entrepreneurs and advocates who have been working in this, particularly me. I would love to be able to expand in Detroit. We went from a two-and-a-half-acre site. We are going before city council here soon to expand to five or six acres. I believe that once we create these larger pilots, that is going to open up a door for more opportunity for expansion.

Senator Boozman. Very good.

Mr. Hairston. Senator, just one thing I would like to add to that question, the power of the data is going to allow us to solve the right problem for that community. One of the things that we talk about sometimes, maybe more of a Federal or a broader brush, the reality is, the solution is different based on each community, and by having the data, it allows that community to really focus there. It may be education, it may be infrastructure, it may be something else. But by having this data that this bill or this Act will put in place, it is going to allow us to really tailor that need to meet each community's

gap and solve that problem.

Senator Boozman. That really was going to be my next kind of follow-up. One of the things that Senator Carper and I did in the Recycling and Composting Accountability Act was make it so that we collect a lot more data and making sure that the data is out there to help you all do your stuff, but also to inform the legislators, the people at all levels of government as to what exactly is going on, so that we have a better ability to respond.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Carper. [Presiding.] Senator Boozman, thank you so much.

This is an interesting morning. We have all these votes going on on the Floor, committees meeting, marking up, voting on issues, and trying to hold a hearing on an important issue. But thank you for helping to make it all work and for being a great partner in this.

I also want to say what I think of it. I want to thank our staffs. Sometimes we get the credit as members, or blamed for progress made or not made. We are blessed with the staff we have on both sides of the aisle, so I want to thank all of them, including one who is leaving at the end of this week.

I want to come back to Mr. Hairston for a question dealing with recycling end markets, recycling end markets. Mr.

Hairston, we all know that the existence of robust end markets for recycling products is critical to the longevity and effectiveness of the recycling industry. The Recycling and Composting Accountability Act would require the Environmental Protection Agency to study and issue a report on the end market sale of all recyclable materials collected from households and processed at a materials recovery facility. This would include looking at the end market sale of materials like, for example, plastic, like paper, like glass, like aluminum, just to name a few of the most common ones.

My question of you, Mr. Hairston, is this. Based on your experience, how could this study on end markets be a useful tool to both the public and private sector, and what kind of benefits might we see from studying this at the federal level?

Mr. Hairston. Thanks for the question. Again, I think what the study is going to allow us to do is really have data to go in and confirm or potentially identify what is the hypothesis or the opportunity we are trying to solve.

The end markets, International Paper, again, has a 2030 goal of 100 percent recyclable, reusable, compostable material. Our goal is that that product that we are producing is able to meet that circularity. This data will help prove that, and it would help us continue to innovate solutions for our customer base and for others.

So I think, again, when I think of the Recycling and Composting Act, and the data that we will have on both a local and federal level, it will allow private companies, along with the public, to partner on how to solve the gaps and where materials are really being diverted, and how can we do the right things to drive that end market.

Senator Carper. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Yepsen, a question for you, if I could, also on composting end markets. What are some of the differences between composting and recycling end markets? What are some of the differences between composting end markets and recycling end markets, and how will this separate study be useful in ultimately reducing the amount of food waste in our landfills?

Mr. Yepsen. It is a good question. There are so many differences for the end markets for recyclables versus compost. When we are thinking about recycling end markets, we are thinking about post-consumer recycled content going back into new packaging as a direct input.

When we are thinking about compost end markets, those are not a direct input back into new packaging materials or directly into new food, there is a slightly longer system there. So I think the reason that this study and extra data will be so important is just showing all those varieties of avenues for end markets for finished compost and making sure that we are driving

those end markets. Because the commonality between recycling end markets and composting is that if you don't have an end market, your business falls apart. We heard about this earlier, that a lot of composting businesses have historically focused on that tip fee, the money generated from materials coming in, rather than the markets for the finished compost and the sale of that compost. Obviously you need both of those for recycling and composting, the tip fee and the end market.

But I think that that is where there is some commonality. We have to have that more knowledge and data around what those end markets are and ways that we can make sure that we drive that through.

Senator Carper. Thanks for that response.

Mr. Yepsen, we are going to stay with you for just a minute. I will direct the same question on proper management of composting facilities. I want to direct this to you, but also to Ms. Murray. I will direct it to you initially, and then we will get over to her.

One of the challenges that often accompanies composting facilities and may act as a deterrent for communities who might otherwise want to start a program is the odor. In fact, my State of Delaware has faced some challenges with this issue in the past. We have a lot of chickens in Delaware. We are not a big State, but we are a big ag State, as it turns out, and we

raise, I think, for every person in Delaware, there are 300 chickens, and they create a lot of chicken manure.

We have been working for decades to figure out what to do with all of that chicken manure and straw and sawdust that comes out of our poultry houses. I think we are making some pretty good progress, some really good progress.

But my question to you is what can composting facility managers do to reduce or eliminate any odors associated with composting?

Mr. Yepsen. That is a good question, and I am familiar with some of the composting facilities that have existed and are no longer in Delaware, partly around issues due to odor. I think that the simple answer is, there are ways to successfully compost without huge amounts of odor. The U.S. Composting Council has a Certified Operator Program, and there are composting classes that happen all around the Country in different States hosted by the U.S. Composting Council or universities or master gardener programs.

So it is definitely possible to run a facility without odors, and it comes down to biology, I think. They are not super high-tech solutions to control odors, they can be taught within these schools. Again, it kind of leads back to that other question of what is the business model of those composting facilities? Are they really driving to get the maximum tonnage

coming in to get that tip fee, or are they really taking their time to compost successfully and well, rather than trying to rush that process?

Senator Carper. Thanks for that response.

Ms. Murray, really the same two questions. The first question again was, what can composting facility managers do to reduce or eliminate any odors associated with composting? Then a follow-up question is how can education programs like the development of voluntary guidelines in the Recycling and Composting Accountability Act that we are having this hearing on today, how can those guidelines help enhance existing or new compost programs? Take it away, thank you.

Ms. Murray. Thank you. Really quickly, on the end market question that you asked earlier.

Senator Carper. Please.

Ms. Murray. The Department of Transportation, construction companies, the Department of Environmental Quality, these are all sources that can actually use as an end market for water runoff of freeways and interstates. Construction sites buy millions, millions of dollars of compost and soils. They are always looking for resources around that.

So I just wanted to put that on record, that there are opportunities with the Department of Transportation and other government organizations, as well as construction companies that

buy it as fill. But also when you look at land, lakes, rivers, when you look at soil remediation, there is an opportunity for us to divert that compost in those directions, as well.

We have run pilots, so we have seen the water, the soil, it captures water as a filter as well, so we have seen these things happen.

Of course, you mentioned data. That is very important, but we have to hold waste management companies in general and others who control these landfills, we can collect all the data we want, but we have to mandate and make sure that we are getting the right data and that all honesty and transparency is happening when you are collecting the data, as well.

Now, when we are talking about odor, what I have done with manure, spent grain from breweries, restaurants, you have to look at, again, the carbon and nitrogen, as you mentioned. It depends on what the model is.

So, if you are receiving a lot of feedstock, if you will, that has odor, it is imperative that you manage that in a certain amount of time. There is a timeframe in which you do not want to allow those materials to sit and rot and decompose. So you have to have mandates around holding facilities accountable, depending on zoning.

This is where the local government is going to come into play as well. Municipalities have to have zoning and laws

around what they are going to do in specific areas, because the zoning is key. In a place like Detroit, we are located along the river. We have certain zones that we only allow composting to be operated. That is going to be key. You do not want residents to smell these odors.

But can we retain this water runoff and make sure that we are reducing odor? Absolutely. It is about process. There are simple solutions. You can use sawdust, woodchips, all kinds of browns, I call them, products, the carbon, to suppress that.

But in vessel technology, anaerobic digesters, the zoo that we work with, the Detroit Zoological Society, has an anaerobic digester. That works as a simple system. That manure and that food waste is processed, that energy that is retained, that methane is used to heat a building, the animal hospital. The solids go into one area, the liquids go into another. So it can be done. The odor can definitely be suppressed.

Your last question, I believe, you talked about education? Is that what you mentioned?

Senator Carper. Yes.

Ms. Murray. What I have seen, which is phenomenal, is, let's take a company like General Motors or an automotive community. They feed thousands of people. General Motors has 25 restaurants in their headquarters. Then you take a small mom-and-pop restaurant, or you have someone as large as

Campbell's or a brewing facility.

What happens is, all those materials represent something different. They all have a certain lifespan. You have to go in and educate the head chef of these restaurants to make sure that they are sorting and separating, just like you have to talk to a major corporation about how long is that food waste going to sit on that docking area. We have collected food waste from numerous sources, but it is all in process and education, depending on if you are manufacturing food, if you are cooking the food, whoever you are, whether it is a household, there is a lifespan in which you have to manage that food waste properly.

Senator Carper. Every now and then, we have witnesses, after we ask questions, they will say thank you for that question. I want to say, thank you for those answers. Those were very good, very helpful.

This next question is for all witnesses, and I think every one of you has mentioned the term circular market or circular markets, as we have been in this hearing today. We will kind of go in reverse order here. We will go with Mr. Harvey, Ben Harvey. I will ask you to respond initially, Ben.

This past fall, as you know, we held a roundtable series and a committee hearing on the concept of a circular economy. We heard from stakeholders from a variety of industries and organizations as well as State and local governments as to what

it would take to truly transition to an economy that values and promotes circularity at every step of the industrial process.

The Recycling and Composting Accountability Act would continue this conversation by directing the Environmental Protection Agency to conduct a study on the amounts of recyclable materials that are being lost out of the circular market in a variety of ways. Ben, I am going to ask you to lead off on this one. How can having a better understanding of how materials that could otherwise be reused being lost from the circular market be beneficial to each of your industries and the Country as a whole?

Mr. Harvey, I am going to ask you to take that one initially, and then we will turn to Mr. Hairston.

Mr. Harvey. Okay, thank you. The great data gives us the opportunity to plan our MRFs and our markets to take this material and, again, bring it in. If we have the data soon enough, the correct data, the amount of material that we are going to be gathering, where it is going to come from, what we can turn it into, then we can make smart business decisions. We can make those decisions, okay, do we put in more, in our industry's case, can we put in more optical sorters, do we need to have more robotics, do we need to establish and look for more markets for this material to go into.

Without this information, it comes into our facilities, and

we are dealing with it kind of on-the-go. We are very adaptable. We are used to doing that. But again, concrete, good data is so important to moving this along.

Senator Carper. Thank you.

Mr. Hairston, please, same question.

Mr. Hairston. Thanks, Senator. We strongly support the provisions that require EPA to conduct a study of recyclable materials, the commercial and municipal waste streams, where the previous 10 years that were diverted from the circular market. We believe that the study will highlight the strong recycling rates of paper and paper-based packaging and help clarify why our current recycling rates are reaching a practical maximum without potential regulations to improve.

Examples like products similar to wallboard tape and tissue, which aren't really identified for recovery, are things that may show up in the study. But the data will also, again, allow us to make sure we focus on the right items. One of the biggest things impacting the circularity of fiber-based products is contamination. The Recycle Act is focused on education, and we think what education does is it reduces contamination. But the data will also help make sure we are focused in the right areas going forward.

Senator Carper. Thank you. I am going to ask our other two witnesses to, Mr. Yepsen and Ms. Murray, I am going to ask

you to answer that question for the record.

Now I am going to yield to Senator Boozman, you are all done? Okay, all in.

Okay, in that case, I am going to ask Senator Yepsen --
[Laughter.]

Senator Carper. If you stay long enough, you might be. Mr. Yepsen and Ms. Murray, to go back and answer the same question that has just been answered by our other witnesses, and that is, just to remind you, how can having a better understanding of how materials that could otherwise be reused are being lost from the circular market be beneficial to each of your industries and to our Country as a whole? Please go ahead, Mr. Yepsen, Ms. Murray.

Mr. Yepsen. Yes, thank you. I think one of the reasons that this would be so important is that we need the systems-based approach, right, it is not just the number of the facilities or the number of collection programs. Having federal data and studies that show all of these different elements and to start using some common language are really important. Because right now, we have different State reporting requirements.

I think that has been part of the challenge when we look at something like composting, is that there are different definitions of what is recyclable or compostable from community

to community, from State to State. States have different requirements for what has to be reported to them or not reported, and that makes it really challenging as we start trying to think of what a national strategy is to make sure that we are able to have more communities with composting programs.

Senator Carper. Thank you. Ms. Murray, do you want to bat cleanup on this one?

Ms. Murray. Sure. I agree with Rhodes that, with a national strategy, we have to look at throughout the Country the different regions and States, because it is all different. For instance, in Michigan, when you look at ordinances on the local level with the city and whether you look at the State level, I agree with the language. It all has to translate the same in a harmonious way. We need a commonality around speaking climate and speaking around composting.

But the Department of Transportation may get a different message from the State than what they may get on language from the city. I think it all has to align in order for us to positively move forward.

When I first started Detroit Dirt, the city did not have any ordinances in place. We had to adhere to guidelines with the State on composting. But now with Part 115, which is what they are working on in Michigan, we are looking at categorizing, if you will. A small household composting, or an urban farmer

is different from a mid-sized level composter, or an industrial composter.

So we definitely want to make sure that we are categorizing the businesses according to certifications, but also making sure that we adhere to a common language that is being used on a city and State and federal level, so it all translates the same.

Senator Carper. Thank you.

Last question, from me and from our committee today, will be directed to Mr. Harvey. It deals with, Mr. Harvey, technical assistance.

As you know, many communities have a desire to improve their recycling programs, but oftentimes, they lack the expertise to make meaningful changes to those programs. The Recycling and Composting Accountability Act that Senator Boozman and I have cosponsored would allow the Environmental Protection Agency to provide technical assistance to States, to local, and tribal communities that wish to use reduce their overall waste or improve their composting and recycling programs.

Mr. Harvey, my question is simply this. Do you believe that the ability to provide technical assistance is important? Can you share with us an example or two of how receiving technical assistance has helped improve a recycling program?

Mr. Harvey. I definitely think that technical assistance is critical to our industry to help the municipalities or help

the rural areas to increase their recycling. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has given grants for technical assistance that have helped us develop markets. Developing those markets, now that we can bring more material in through our system helps us. They have developed the technical market, the technical assistance on glass. They have also given us technical assistance on organics, how to process organics, given us the tools we need to collect and process that material. We are actually using it for anaerobic digestion. We are not composting it. But those are a couple of types of the technical assistance that we have used in our operation.

Senator Carper. Well, good. Thank you.

Those are all the questions we have today. I want to do just a quick wrap-up, here, if I can. We have a couple of sisters who work in our Dover offices and Wilmington office, the King Sisters. They have a favorite saying. Their saying is "Teamwork makes the dream work." How about that? Teamwork makes the dream work.

We are blessed in this committee to be really good at teamwork, and we don't agree on every single thing, but we reported unanimously out of this committee last year bipartisan infrastructure legislation dealing with roads, highways, bridges, bipartisan legislation dealing with water, drinking water, wastewater sanitation, all kinds of issues that can end

up being a part of the bipartisan infrastructure bill that the President signed into law.

We have seen another good demonstration here today of teamwork. I ran out of here to go over to one of my other committees, Homeland Security Committee, I think we had a dozen or more nominations to vote on. We had, I think, a dozen or so bills to go through and to vote on separately. I had an opportunity to speak on at least one of those and make all of our votes, and another vote on the Floor, and it could not have happened without the great teamwork we have here, especially been demonstrated by Senator Capito and Senator Boozman. I just want to say especially thank-yous to them and to others who participated in this hearing, both here in-person and remotely.

I want to thank our staffs as well. We couldn't do it without you, and this is such an important issue, and one that I am quite passionate about. I know a lot of folks on our committee are, and across the Country.

Every now and then, we have an opportunity on issues that are important to our Country on which there is agreement. I like to say, the sun, the moon, the stars are coming into alignment. This is one such day, one such issue. I have been waiting for this issue, for this day, for a long time, and I believe that Senator Capito and Senator Boozman and others on our committee have, as well.

I have all these aphorisms that I like to use, and I could just go through them. In adversity, lies opportunity. That is Einstein. We have plenty of adversity in terms of what do we do with all this waste, whether it is food waste or whether it is other kind of waste that ends up maybe in our trash cans, or maybe in recycling, but there is plenty of opportunity here, too.

I am always looking for ways to put people to work. I am a recovering governor, and the idea of doing something that is good for our planet and good for putting people to work and helping them be self-sufficient, that is always something that is near and dear to my heart.

Someone mentioned hub-and-spoke systems. I think a couple of people mentioned that; a couple of our witnesses did, with respect to making improvement opportunities to recycle and compost in more rural parts of our Country. I especially appreciate hearing that, from a State that has a lot of urban, not up north, but a lot of rural in the southern part of our State.

One of the other thoughts that came to mind for me during the course of this was, find out what works, and do more of that. There you go. Find out what works, do more of that. I was governor and Chairman of the National Governor's Association, and Tommy Thompson, governor of Wisconsin and I

helped create something called Center for Best Practices, kind of a clearinghouse for good ideas. I am going to be sharing with them, I still share with the National Governor's Association's Center for Best Practices. We are going to be talking with them probably later this week about this hearing, and of what we are learning and some of what we are hearing is we can use the NGA as a way to get good information out.

I just am so encouraged by what we have heard here today, encouraged by what is happening, particularly in places like Detroit, but other places, including Delaware and places across the Country, rural, urban, and somewhere in between. There are any numbers of ways to do good things for our planet and create economic opportunity and jobs, and we are onto some really good stuff here, really good stuff here.

Let me see. I think I need to say, this is printed out for me, so I won't forget it. Again, thank you for all those who joined us in person and one from afar. Your support of the two pieces of legislation is going to be really important as we work to pass both of them and make them better, and hopefully pass them and work with the House and the Administration to get them done.

I am thrilled that the EPA, led by Michael Regan, has gotten really serious about recycling. They have taken a lot of input from our committee, as they have provided in their recent

paper.

We enjoyed hearing all the ways that these bills can improve our Nation's recycling and composting programs. It also helps us to appreciate that our waste challenges are vast, but not insurmountable if we take steps now.

Before we adjourn, a little bit of housekeeping. I would like to ask unanimous consent to submit for the record a variety of materials that includes letters from stakeholders and other materials that relate to today's hearing. I love to ask for unanimous consent when I am the only one here, because I am not going to object to my unanimous consent request, so. It is agreed to.

[The referenced information follows:]

Senator Carper. Additionally, I would say to my colleagues on the committee, you will be allowed to submit questions for the record through the close of business on Wednesday, February the 16th. That is a couple of weeks. We will compile those questions, send them out to our witnesses, and ask that you reply by Wednesday, March the 2nd. I believe that is two weeks, if I am not mistaken.

With that, in the Navy, when people do an especially good job on important issues, we have a saying, and that is bravo zulu. Bravo zulu, I would say to each of you, to our committee members, to those who helped, staff, committee members, bravo zulu all around.

With that, I think, it is a wrap. I am going to run and vote again. Thanks, everybody.

[Whereupon, at 12:12 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]