



St. Vincent de Paul Society of Lane County, Inc.

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April 4, 2019

Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee
Oregon Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Senators,

I am writing to ask you to **vote yes on SB 276**, which would establish a product stewardship program for mattresses. The importance of this program cannot be overstated. It hits a triple bottom line of helping people and our planet and generating profits that can be reinvesting in the community.

St. Vincent de Paul of Lane County (SVDP) in Eugene established the first commercially viable mattress recycling program in the world in 1999. We had three goals. The first was to create good-paying jobs for vulnerable populations. As a nonprofit, SVDP strives to find permanent employment for ex-offenders, people with a history of homelessness and other barriers to employment. When we can put these people back to work, we increase the likeliness that will achieve self-sufficiency. Mattress recycling provides excellent employment opportunities for these community members.

Our second goal was to divert a difficult-to-handle product from landfills. Everywhere we went, waste haulers and landfill operators told us they hated mattresses. They're bulky and difficult to handle. They don't compact well in trucks. They can create flammable air pockets in landfills. Removing mattresses for the waste stream benefits solid waste districts, and it benefits the planet as a whole. Up to 85% of the components in the average mattress are recyclable. Those components include steel, wood, foam and cotton that can be sent back to industry for remanufacturing. Mattress recycling prevents the further harvesting of such resources, which is important for the environment.

Mattress recycling also allows SVDP to generate profits that can be plowed back into our charitable programs, which include human services, veterans services and homeless programs in Lane County.

A stewardship program in Oregon will dramatically increase recycling rates at a time when such diversion is difficult due to changing markets. I urge you to support this effort to meet both environmental and human service goals. **Please vote yes on SB 276.**

Sincerely,

Terrence R. McDonald
Executive Director