



May 10, 2021

Senator Lee Beyer, Chair
Vice Chair Lindley, Vice Chair
Senate Energy & Environment Committee
900 Court St. NE, HR B
Salem, OR 97301

Subject: Testimony on HB 2344-A Relating to labeling requirements for wipes

Dear Senator Beyer, Vice Chair Lindley, and Members of the Committee:

The Oregon Association of Clean Water Agencies (ACWA), the League of Oregon Cities (LOC), and the Special Districts Association of Oregon (SDAO) join in strongly supporting and urging you to vote yes on HB 2344-A. Our collective associations represent all public wastewater treatment utilities in the state of Oregon, which are dedicated to protecting and enhancing Oregon's water quality and the public's health, safety and welfare.

Wastewater systems across Oregon and the country have been challenged since the early 2000s by ever-increasing problems of clogged pipes and pumps, broken equipment and sewage overflows caused by disposable wipes products people flush down the toilet. Wastewater systems can only pass materials that readily and quickly break down. That basically boils down to poop, pee, and toilet paper. Other materials—predominantly wipes products flushed down the toilet pile up in the pipes and pumps contain strong plastic and other fibers, mat together with fats, oils, and grease, and create large ropey mats that clog the system and must be manually removed. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and increased use of sanitizing wipes, these problems have only gotten worse, in spite of large-scale public outreach and notification efforts funded by wastewater utilities across the state.

Manual removal of the nasty messes created by wipes is a process that puts workers' health and safety at risk because of exposure to raw sewage. The masses of wipes also cause sewage backups and overflows, which can cause public health and environmental risks. And finally, the ongoing system maintenance required to get wipes out of the pipes adds up to millions of dollars a year in expenses that are passed on to ratepayers.

Wastewater utilities have invested significant efforts in multi-media public outreach campaigns to inform and educate the public about disposable wipes. Unfortunately, even though there are international voluntary labeling specifications, labeling on wipes packages is inconsistent and confusing, or is non-existent. Voluntary initiatives and information campaigns have not solved this problem.

HB 2344-A, which will require certain disposable wet wipes products to include the Industry Standard "Do Not Flush" label on wipes packaging, is needed to provide clear information to consumers. Similar legislation was passed in the last session of the Washington State legislature, which is set to go into effect July 1, 2022. Our local government partnership of the LOC, the SDAO, and ACWA have worked

diligently with industry representatives to suggest language in this bill that is consistent with the Washington legislation in ways that will ensure a level playing field and similar requirements across state lines. We also have worked with State agencies to suggest language that will not create a significant fiscal impact to the State. We believe that the language of this reflects strong consensus and has bi-partisan support.

ACWA, LOC, and SDAO strongly support HB 2344-A, which will help our wastewater service providers contain costs and associated user rates, reduce hazardous conditions for wastewater workers, and prevent sewage overflows to public rights of way, rivers, and streams. Toilets are not trash cans, and this bill will require product manufacturers to help convey that message.

Thank you for considering our testimony.

Sincerely,

Susan L. Smith
Executive Director
Oregon Association of Clean Water Agencies

Tracy Rainey
Intergovernmental Affairs Associate
League of Oregon Cities

Mark Landauer
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