

Submitter:

Austin Eversole

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

House Committee On Climate, Energy, and Environment

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

HB4144

My name is Austin Eversole and live in south Beaverton. I'm writing to express my support for HB 4144. This bill is needed to decrease some of the damage we are doing to our ecosystems - both wildlife and agriculture - as well as protect firefighters, waste workers, and communities that would be exposed to these toxins.

Lithium-ion batteries, the same ones that power our phones, laptops, and even cars, are filled with metals and toxic chemicals designed to store energy. When improperly discarded, these batteries don't just disappear. Over time, their casing corrodes and leaks heavy metals like cobalt, nickel, and manganese. Rainwater carries these toxins deep into the soil, where they seep into local water systems. Streams, wells, and reservoirs—the very sources communities depend on—become contaminated.

Communities are exposed to toxins that can cause neurological damage, respiratory illness, and long-term developmental issues.

Wildlife and agriculture suffer, as poisoned water weakens ecosystems and compromises food sources.

Also firefighters and waste workers face danger, as landfill fires triggered by batteries spread quickly and release noxious smoke. The 2024 report from the National Waste & Recycling Association found that U.S. recycling facilities have more than 5,000 fires each year, many caused by lithium batteries thrown away incorrectly. From 2022 to 2025, facility fires increased by 26% compared to the 2016-2021 average, mostly because more batteries are ending up in the waste stream.

Alkaline batteries like the AA batteries bought for most appliances also cause environmental destruction and endanger surrounding communities when improperly thrown into the landfill bin. These batteries contain materials like zinc, manganese dioxide, and steel, which, while not highly toxic, can still cause harm when they degrade.

A bigger problem I would like to address when it comes to Alkaline batteries - it frustrates me to end how battery producers (specifically AA, AAA batteries) make a couple rechargeable products but consistently and methodically stock the shelves of local grocery stores with non-recharge batteries. Rechargeable batteries can be used 500+ times until they degrade. Compared to a single use battery - 1 time. Rechargeable batteries should obviously be the solution here. Battery manufacturers

and distributors primarily do not stock many rechargeable batteries because they do not want to stick their necks out and be more expensive than the rest.

I would support a bill that would ban all non-rechargeable batteries in Oregon state. This would even the playing ground for battery manufactures to sell only rechargeable batteries without worries of losing customers because their competitors must also only sell rechargeable batteries. Exceptions can be made for towns close to other state borders (i.e. Ontario). I would love to see conversations around this.

But this bill HB4144's solution of requiring producers of batteries or battery-containing products to join a battery producer responsibility organization and implement a battery producer responsibility program for the collection and recycling of batteries is an excellent start to address this situation, and I support it strongly.