

Testimony of Thomas Egleston, Policy & Program Development Manager

Testimony in Support of HB 4144

House Committee on Climate, Energy, and Environment

February 5, 2026



Metro is the regional government of the Portland metropolitan area, with major responsibility for managing the region's solid waste and providing opportunities for recycling and waste reduction. We serve a population of 1.7 million, including e-cycles collection sites at our transfer stations, and educational resources that protect human health, environmental health and support waste reduction.

Battery-caused fires are becoming a major issue for operators in garbage and recycling systems. In 2025, Metro experienced 61 fires at our two transfer stations. Of these 61 fires, 35 recovered a battery as an ignition source and an additional 23 had characteristics of a battery fire. Only 3 of the 61 fires were attributed to an ignition source that was not a battery. We have seen the frequency of these fires increase and are concerned that increase will continue as more and more consumer products are powered by batteries.

In February 2024, the Association of Oregon Recyclers convened members representing private and public industry, local government, and non-profit organizations to discuss the problem of battery fires. After in-depth discussion, consensus was reached that we needed to get batteries out of garbage and recycling bins. The group decided to explore an extended producer responsibility program for batteries. These programs all establish convenient recycling options for community members and divert materials away from garbage and recycling bins.

After a few months of discussions, Metro and Lane County brought in a third-party facilitator, to convene statewide stakeholders and developed this bill. This multi-month stakeholder process resulted in the elements you see included in the bill, including which materials are covered and which materials are excluded from the program. The collaborative process continued during the 2025 session and interim which led to the polished bill before you today.

Metro urges your support for HB 4144. The bill will prevent battery fires in our solid waste system, increase safety for our solid waste workers, and reduce harmful chemicals from entering our landfills.