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March 5, 2024

Senator Steve Southerland, Chair
Senator Shane Reeves, Vice-Chair
Senator Adam Lowe, Vice-Chair
Senate Committee on Energy, Agriculture, and Natural Resources
600 Charlotte Ave
Nashville, TN 37219

RE: Support for SB 573, Tennessee Waste Reduction and Recycling Act

Dear Chair Southerland, Vice-Chairs Reeves and Lowe, and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of **SB 573** to create an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) program for packaging materials in Tennessee that will support resource conservation through waste reduction, reuse, recycling, and sustainability.

Tennessee has a packaging waste problem that has outgrown the available infrastructure and capacity to handle it. With the rise of e-commerce, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the growth of flexible packaging, Tennessee's waste infrastructure is unequipped to properly handle the influx of increased packaging and new materials. Roughly 900,000 tons of packaging waste is landfilled each year, averaging 690 pounds per household, with Tennessee ranking 48th in the U.S. regarding recycling rates. EPR for packaging can help expand recycling, increase recycling rates, and provide continual, sustainable funding to address the waste problem in Tennessee.

SB 573 will provide crucial funding from producers to relieve municipalities of the financial burdens they currently face in operating recycling programs, create local jobs, and stimulate local recycling and material processing industries. SB 573 will also create transparency in recycling processes and costs, reduce waste and greenhouse gas emissions, and provide meaningful investments in needed infrastructure.

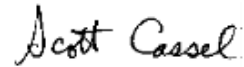
SB 573 incorporates the basic elements that PSI believes are critical for successful EPR for packaging legislation. The bill does an exemplary job of establishing clear roles and responsibilities for program participants related to stewardship plans, reporting requirements, public education, and enforcement. The bill also incorporates emerging best practices for packaging EPR regarding needs assessments, definitions, waste reduction, reuse, performance measures and targets, and the role of the Advisory Council. Even so, the bill could be strengthened by adding paper products – a significant percentage of the waste stream.

Packaging EPR has been successfully implemented throughout Europe and Asia for over 35 years, and in five Canadian provinces for over 15 years. Four states – Colorado, Oregon, California, and Maine – have already passed EPR for packaging laws that are currently in development.

The Product Stewardship Institute (PSI) is a national policy expert and consulting nonprofit that pioneered product stewardship in the United States along with a coalition of hundreds of state and local government officials. Since 2000, PSI's policy models have helped to develop producer responsibility policies for many of the 136 EPR laws enacted for 18 industry sectors in 33 states.

I urge you to **support SB 573** for the financial and environmental health of Tennessee's economy. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (617) 513-3954, or Scott@ProductStewardship.US.

Sincerely,



Scott Cassel
Chief Executive Officer/Founder