

Written Testimony for the NY State Senate Budget Scoping Plan from the Textiles Committee of the Manhattan Solid Waste Advisory Board - 1/19/23

I'm Sharon Silbermann, submitting testimony as the Textile Committee Chair for the Manhattan Solid Waste Advisory Board.

New York City residents throw **400 million pounds** of apparel and textiles into our municipal waste stream annually. According to the NYS DEC, "New York State residents and businesses throw away almost **1.4 billion pounds** of textiles, including: clothing, footwear, belts, hats, handbags, drapes, towels, sheets and other linens that could be reused or recycled. While we recycle around 15% of post-consumer textiles, that means 85% of our used clothing and other textiles are ending up as waste in landfills and incinerators when the majority of these materials can be reused or recycled providing social, environmental, and economic benefits."

Our charities, overrun with donations, ship **mountains** of our leftovers to foreign markets unable to absorb this excess. In turn, what goes unsold gets dumped on **their** beaches, and in **their** oceans and deserts.

Designers and brands source virgin materials because they're deceptively cheap, plus there's **not enough recycled fiber**, at scale, to satisfy the demand. fiber production into textiles accounts for the **MAJORITY of GHGs** in fashion along with the enormous quantity of water and energy used in the agricultural and manufacturing processes. **Recycled** fibers eliminate **virtually all** virgin fiber processing!

New York State recently signed the Textiles Act aimed at developing an animal and plant fiber textile manufacturing industry.

New York State has also introduced the Fashion Act, which would, when enacted, hold apparel manufacturers responsible for mapping supply chains, reporting impacts, setting reduction goals, and disclosing their materials usage.

The NYS DEC also posits that " the potential market value of all these discarded materials is almost \$130 million, with over 1,000 jobs that would be created across NY state if these materials were recovered for reuse and recycling instead of being thrown away.

These, along with federal initiatives to re-shore production and invest in recycling that builds the circular economy, begs the question why New York State and New York City aren't aggressively pursuing circular textile recycling as a green industry capable of supporting all these legislative proposals while developing a multibillion dollar opportunity **RIGHT HERE?**

Apparel and textiles are responsible for roughly **8% of GLOBAL GHG** emissions. Per the New York City Department of Sanitation's 2017 waste characterization, **TEXTILES** are **6% of New York City's waste stream**. Their collection, transportation and disposal cost **\$93 million** in 2018. Textiles are **the fastest growing of ALL** waste stream categories in the US! The fashion industry is forecasted to grow an **additional 63% by 2030**, ironically, our deadline

for lowering GHGs by 50% and achieving Zero Waste! If unaddressed, this would increase New York City's **annual textile waste to 625 million pounds**, and skyrocket costs to **\$151 million annually in just 7 years!** This should be spent on curbside collection, education, sorting, and building circular recycling infrastructure.

65% of our wardrobes are polyester, one of the many fossil fuel-derived synthetics, all of which **NEVER** biodegrade and create microplastics that end up in our water and food supply and have been shown to act as endocrine disruptors and carcinogens. Even natural fiber content produces methane in anaerobic landfill conditions. Clothing and textiles aren't trash and should never be landfilled or incinerated. Their value can and must be recaptured as a resource for new, recycled fiber production.

At scale, recycled content should cost no more than virgin content whose **REAL COST** is never realized in the environmental and health harms it causes. **This is the basis** for the need for effective **Textile EPR legislation**, for imbedding block chain for transparency to consumers and waste management processors, and ensuring the fiscal responsibility of manufacturers when their products' end of life cost taxpayers millions.

We need New York State to examine the entirety of our apparel and textile industries, our role as consumers, the state of our environment, and the millions of dollars spent on end of life waste management that currently only functions as a linear business model. The budget needed to establish both responsible Textile EPR legislation and a circular textile recycling and innovation infrastructure is a fraction of the cost of endless landfilling and incineration fees, environmental cleanups, and health impacts.

Please USE your position to make the only choices that make any sense. Please include significant funding when planning the NY State budget to allow for this industry to be established and thrive. And please let the MSWAB help you create effective legislation and implement measures to achieve Zero Waste for apparel and textiles!

My contact is below; please reach out with any questions or requests.

Thank You!

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