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North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources

Beverly Eaves Perdue
Governor

Dee Freeman
Secretary

July 14, 2009

Lisa Jackson, Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Ariel Rios Building
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Ms. Jackson:

I am writing to request your agency's attention to one of the most critical environmental and economic issues facing communities around the country— the need for a system of financing for local recycling programs. These programs are the backbone of sustainable materials management in the U.S. Improving their performance would deliver enormous benefits, including the creation of green jobs, the conservation of resources and energy, and the reduction of greenhouse gases. However, these programs will fall short of their potential to contribute to these broad goals if they rely solely on local funding sources that are severely limited and subject to many competing demands.

The huge progress made by community recycling programs over the past two decades has stagnated at precisely the time when the commodity industries – paper, plastic, glass, aluminum, and steel – have become more dependent than ever on recovered materials. Industries in the U.S. and abroad are turning to recycled materials as their primary feedstocks because of the energy and climate change benefits and the growing scarcity of virgin resources. However, the main supply base for these recovered commodities is a local government-finance infrastructure that has little ability to expand, which presents a huge challenge to the sustainable use of materials in our country and around the world. EPA should conduct a dedicated effort to address this issue.

Successful financing and material recovery models in many European and Asian countries and the Canadian provinces of Ontario, Quebec and soon Manitoba show that there are viable alternatives to building a sustainable materials economy that depends on the local tax structure. Such policies have lead to increased recycling rates and improved efficiency in local programs, while also helping to meet the needs of the commodity industries and the increasing commitment of consumer product companies to more environmentally sustainable packaging.

To address this critical issue, I request that you consider convening a multi-stakeholder dialogue to explore sustainable financing strategies for municipal recycling. Such a dialogue must involve representatives of State and local government, not-for-profit advocacy organizations, and the manufacturers of the products and packaging that are managed in the municipal recycling stream. In doing so, the US EPA would provide a tremendous service to States and local governments in

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conserving resources and reducing waste. We think such an initiative would be especially helpful to rural and poorer communities that have particular hardships in conducting recycling programs. Such a dialogue would also ensure the achievement of EPA's Resource Conservation Challenge objectives and contribute significantly to your efforts on climate change.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter. I trust you will be in a position to move forward on recycling and resource conservation. Feel free to call upon me should you have any questions.

Sincerely yours,

Dee Freeman
Secretary

DAF/
cc: Mathy Stanislaus, Assistant Administrator, OSWER
Matt Hale, Director, Office of Resource Conservation and Recovery
Betsy Smidinger, Director, ORCR, Resource Conservation and Sustainability Division
Stan Meiburg, Acting Administrator, EPA Region IV