



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
L A C R O S S E

May 21, 2018

President Donald Trump  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

In 2017, China announced that it would impose a new standard for certain recyclables of no more than 0.5 percent contaminants and forbid the import of 4 classes of material, 24 kinds of solid wastes, including plastic waste from containers holding items used for human consumption, unsorted waste paper, and waste textile materials. As of March 1, 2018, China implemented their decision to ban the import of recyclable materials that do not meet this impractical standard. Consequences of this decision are having significant impacts on the waste and recycling industry in the United States and Canada; which could eventually lead to the loss of tens of thousands of jobs and closure of many recycling businesses throughout North America.

For years, China has imported massive quantities of waste materials from the United States to be recycled and used for manufacturing purposes for new products. This relationship has been mutually beneficial since the United States market for consumer recyclables is not as strong. However, China has begun closing its doors to importing recyclables and that poses a threat on several levels to the United States.

Given the amount of recyclable materials shipped to China, there currently is not enough capacity to absorb the unsorted paper and post-consumer plastics that are now banned. The fallout from this ban could have a devastating effect on recycling, while also having the potential to set the industry back decades. Thus far, China's ban has depreciated the costs of these materials.

In addition, the lack of markets for some of the materials altogether has resulted in them being stockpiled or landfilled. In turn, this could shake the public's confidence and create long term consequences in material quality and segregation efforts, in which the United States has worked so hard to avoid.

The National Waste & Recycling Association (NWRA) has urged the Chinese government to adopt international standards and expressed concern that the environment would be the biggest loser when recycling programs fail and when manufacturers revert to using resource intensive virgin materials. Manufacturing products using virgin materials uses much more energy and depletes more natural resources, as opposed to producing goods using recycled materials. The NWRA has requested that the Chinese government modify the standards by phasing its new requirements in over a period of five-years to allow time for the global recycling community to adapt to the changes. Please consider supporting the recycling industry by advocating for China to phase in its new recycling requirements over the course of 5 years.

Thank you for your consideration of this issue which is of great importance to both our economy and environment.

Most respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Kabat". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Mayor Tim Kabat  
Board of Public Works Chair

C: U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin  
U.S. Senator Ron Johnson  
Congressman Ron Kind