

Recycling Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting Agenda

June 11, 2025, 8:00am – 9:30am

Minute Taker: Debby Knight

Hybrid Meeting

Members present: Dave Demme, Debby Galef, Tracie Gordon, Sakiko Isomichi, Debby Knight, Elka Kuhlman, Emily Lee, Richard Nurse, Carlie Peters, Diane Roseman, Meera Singh, Helen Snively, Quinten Steenhuis, Rob Vandenabeele, Stephanie Wasiuk

Members absent: Dailey Brannin, Lee Elliott, Dawn Quirk

Staff Present: Mike Orr

Public present: Judy Nathans, Tamene Tedla, Amy Waltz

1. Housekeeping

- Vote on May 2025 Minutes - Approved

2. City Updates:

- DPW Budget hearing with City Council:
 - Many BigBellys being purchased this summer. Nearly all Victor Stanley open-top trash and recycle receptacles will be swapped out by late summer or early fall. BigBellys will help with rodent control and have sensors which can be monitored remotely to see how full they are. There are no compost BigBellys at the moment - not enough demand yet. Most food waste related to restaurants comes from back-of-house; front-of-house waste is smaller and tends to be quite contaminated. Some discussion of events at various places such as universities and what the perceived food waste vs trash and recycling is. Depends on the organization and size of event. Anecdotal stories of Harvard reflect that there are many different schools and parts of the University and that it varies from place to place and event to event. Issues mentioned related to lack of composting available in Harvard housing.
 - City will start collecting public area recycling in-house rather than contracting out - already have trucks doing public area trash and staff and will be much less expensive
 - One of the largest increases in DPW's budget is curbside recycling contract. Five-year curbside contract with Casella is running out, so that will result in increase
 - Two EV trucks are being added to the contract starting 10/31/25. EV's cost about \$300K more, but there is some grant support. Require special charging stations - Casella spending \$100K, to put in chargers, upgrade power supply from the grid.
- Free Store recap - congratulations!
 - Excellent support from sub-committee, people really helped with advertising. Floor plan, volunteer turnout were much better this year. Thanks to Emily and Helen for meticulous, superb planning, Stephanie for all the signs and flyers, and all the volunteers. Discussion of things to improve for next year, including issues related to space organization and parking. Waiting to get numbers from Helpsy and learn what they don't want to accept next year. Issues with dropping things off at Goodwill, even though they had been contacted ahead of time. Had to be assertive with DPW staff about taking the recycling. Someone was there from Boston Urban Mechanics who came to check out the event and will perhaps sponsor one in Boston.
- YWCA event recap

- Small but great - information available, many played the sorting game, had debates; want to connect with the environmental groups in the City.
- Move-out waste Pilot results
 - 185 pieces of furniture, 65 bags of household goods recovered
 - Donation value was more than \$10,000. However, the purchase value of goods well over \$50,000. (They use an estimator from the Salvation Army to determine value of items.)
 - People loved the program and asked if it would be offered again.
 -
- 6/9 City Council hearing: Zero Waste Master Plan 2.0 is adopted
 - Can now move forward with everything in it
 - Comment about the impact of the presentation last month and the photo of the number of rail cars leaving the area with our trash; wondering whether anyone is exploring a massive incinerator with CO2 scrubbing - to capture the enormous amount of energy going to the landfill without adding CO2 to the atmosphere. Is it time for Cambridge to ask that fundamental question? State is focusing on getting diversion numbers up as well as new technology.
 - Idea - all read the Zero Waste Master Plan and have that as our September meeting topic
- Volunteer opportunities: Fresh Pond Day, Hoops N Health - need more people to sign up

3. Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)

- What is EPR?
 - Extended Producer Responsibility (information from Product Stewardship Institute attached) is the requirement that the manufacturers and producers of certain items are responsible for their ultimate disposal
 - Many different products can be included. Used mattresses as an example of how the process works. If the ultimate disposal of an item is very expensive, it motivates the manufacturer to reduce those costs, as the cost is internalized at the time of purchase. Consumers will see costs increase, but it's for a very specific purpose, unlike tariffs. For example, EPR could shift cost of mattress recycling to producers, reducing what the City pays. May not lower taxes, but can offset tax increases. EPR incentivizes producers to develop strategies to reduce costs.
 - MA lagging behind most of NE and some other states. Only mercury thermostats and mercury auto switches have EPR laws in MA at the moment.
 - Clean energy bill passed last year to establish a special legislation commission to recommend EPR policies for the Commonwealth. Findings due 1/15/26. Includes 10+ stakeholder groups, has held 6 public meetings. Will make recommendations for paint, mattresses, batteries, electronics, and packaging/printed paper (see webpage link to follow this Commission)
 - DEP would be the organization to address this and report to Governor and it has not yet been a priority
 - Strong support for battery EPR - there have been numerous fires related to improper disposal of batteries. Waste haulers, disposal facilities, fire fighting associations are all supporting battery EPR. Hugely costly with fires, insurance, etc.
 - Create a wide network of no-cost collection sites; uniform robust education campaign
 - Paint recyclers in MA - ReColor - people can buy their products
 - What about UTEC? Not hugely in favor of EPR. With EPR, the processor is no longer negotiating with the municipalities, rather with larger companies instead. There may be shifts away from smaller businesses.

- Changes a lot about how producers go about their business. May shift manufacturing to reduce recycling costs - paper milk carton example - either develop new recyclable containers or push for mixed material carton recycling. Manufacturers don't want to see a large price increase to consumers
- Ecomodulation - can pay less if you design more environmentally friendly packaging
- Costs have been defaulted to the municipalities and the consumer under the current system
- Cambridge - disposal costs are borne by city; in some other nearby communities it costs \$65 to dispose of a mattress, people pay to go to hazardous waste collections, etc. Efficiencies really kick in with EPR. One community rather than hundreds, manufacturers incentivized to make the system more efficient and cost-effective
- MRFs are very anti-EPR

4. Closing, 9:20am (10 min)

- Action Plan/Decisions
 - Fill out Doodle for summer social
 - Sign up to volunteer at events this summer
- Announcements
 - Summer social; fill out the Doodle
 - Dawn Quirk departing MIT.

Upcoming Meetings in 2025

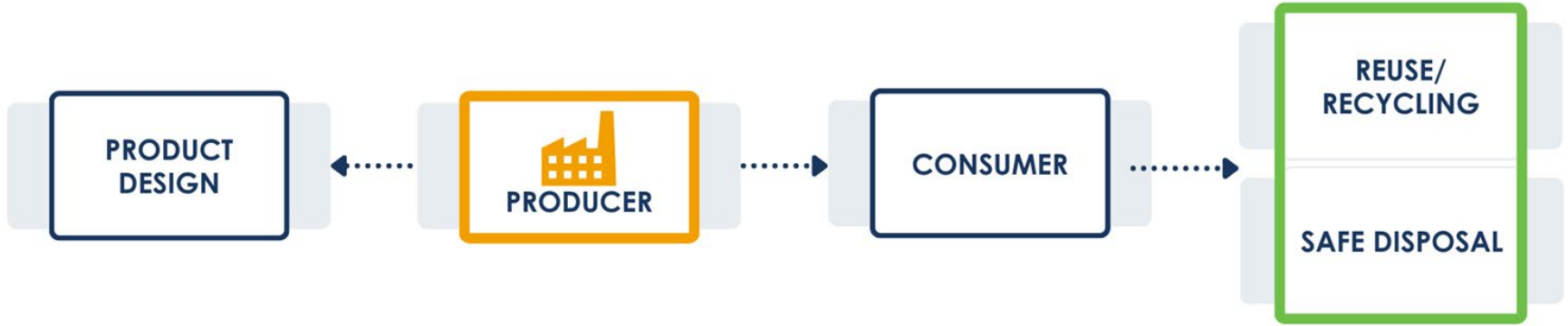
- September 10
- October 8
- November 12
- December 10

Overview:

Product Stewardship &

Extended Producer Responsibility

PRODUCT STEWARDSHIP & EXTENDED PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY

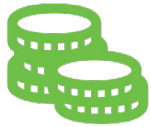


A **law** that **extends** a producer's financial and managerial **responsibility** for its products and packaging beyond the manufacturing stage — both **upstream** to product design and **downstream** to **postconsumer** reuse, recycling, or safe disposal.

Extended producer responsibility (EPR) is a mandatory type of product stewardship required by law. It includes, at a minimum, the requirement that the manufacturer's responsibility for its product extends to post-consumer management of that product and its packaging. There are two related features of EPR policy:

- (1) shifting financial and management responsibility, with government oversight, upstream to the manufacturer and away from the public sector; and
- (2) providing incentives to manufacturers to incorporate environmental considerations into the design of their products and packaging. EPR levels the playing field among competitors and incentivizes environmentally conscious design.

WHY EPR?



Reduces
**government
costs**



Incentivizes
**waste
reduction,
reuse,
recycling**



Increases
**collection
convenience,
education**



Establishes
**performance
goals** to gauge
program
effectiveness

PRODUCT CATEGORIES



Batteries



Carpet



Electronics



Gas Cylinders



HHW



Junk Mail



Mercury Thermostats



Lighting



Mattresses



Medical Sharps



Mercury Auto Switches



Motor Oil



Packaging & Plastics



Paint



Pesticides



Pharmaceuticals



Phone Books



Radioactive Devices



Refrigerant-Containing Appliances



Solar Panels



Textiles



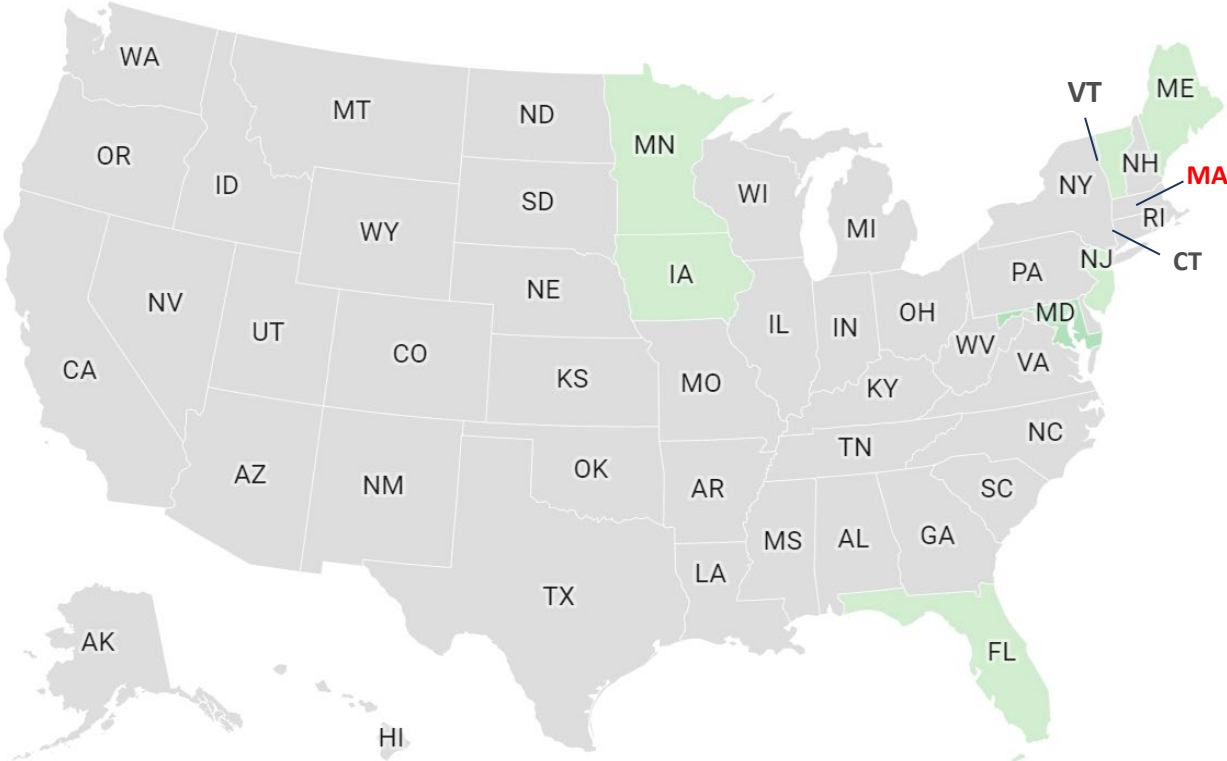
Tires

U.S. EPR LAWS IN 2000

8 laws

1 product

7 states



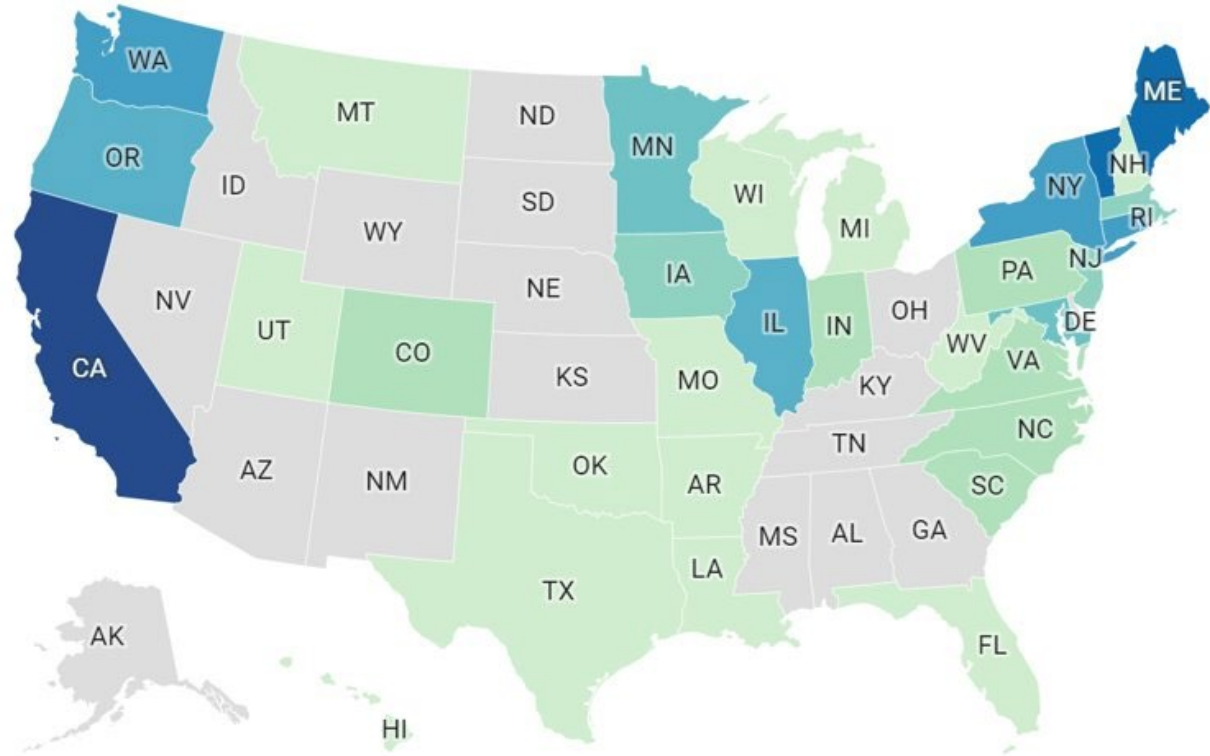
©Product Stewardship Institute, 2023

Number of State EPR Laws in 2000



U.S. EPR LAWS

135 laws
18 products
33 states



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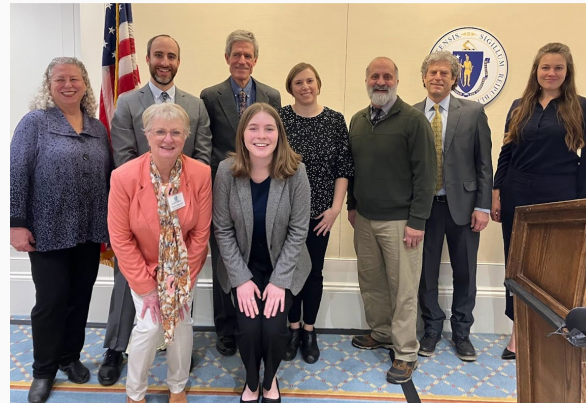
Number of State Laws



Where MA Fits in the EPR Landscape

MassPSC Actions

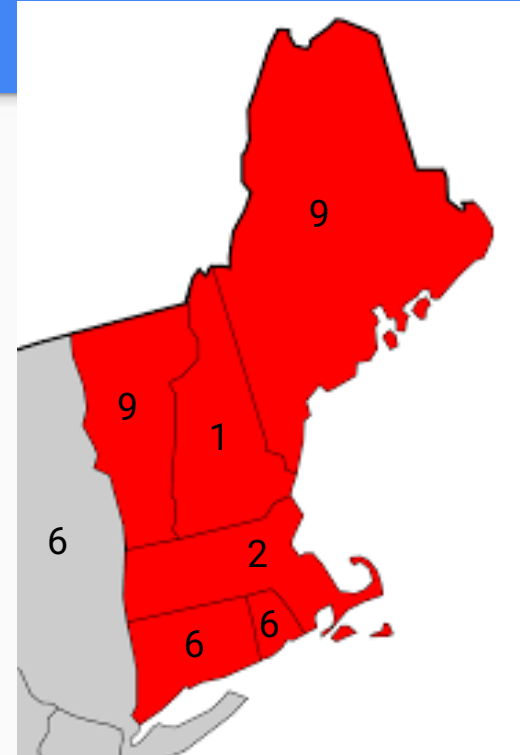
- Mattress recycling demonstration at Statehouse (2018)
- Legislative breakfast on paint and mattresses (2019)
- EPR Summit held at Swanapalooza (2019)
- Submitted testimony supporting EPR bills at various hearings
- Numerous legislative meetings
- Requests for support
- December 2023 Legislative Briefing



Massachusetts is Behind

The 2 active EPR laws in MA pertain to mercury thermostats and mercury auto switches.

Maine	9
Vermont	9
Rhode Island	6
Connecticut	6
New York	6
Massachusetts	2
New Hampshire	1



2025 EPR Commission

- A clean energy bill passed in November 2024 established a special legislative commission to recommend EPR policies for the commonwealth
- DEP Deputy Commissioner will chair the group
- 21 commission appointees representing 10+ stakeholder groups
- 6 public meetings
- Will make recommendations for paint, mattresses, batteries, electronics, and packaging/printed paper
- [Webpage](#) to follow this Commission
- Initial findings due by January 15, 2026

2025-2026 Legislative Session

Batteries are getting a lot of attention

- Strong battery industry support (a relatively recent development)
- Numerous fires related to improper disposal of batteries (see [NWRA report](#))
- Strong stakeholder support including waste haulers, disposal facilities, fire fighting associations
- Increase convenience for residents to responsibly manage batteries
- Reduce municipal costs



Battery EPR as a Solution

- Create a wide network of no-cost collection sites
- Uniform, robust education campaign for consumers to properly manage batteries at end-of-life
- Sustainable funding for battery collection and recycling
 - Cost internalization within product price

MassPSC Actions to Date

- Developed battery EPR bill based on recently passed Illinois bill
- Met with key stakeholders (Call2Recycle, rechargeable battery industry, Illinois PSC)
- Work toward building a stakeholder coalition
 - Met with and gained support from the Fire Chiefs Association
 - Plan to meet with retailers, waste disposal sites, MRFs, facility managers
- Found bill sponsors
- Ensured bills were filed

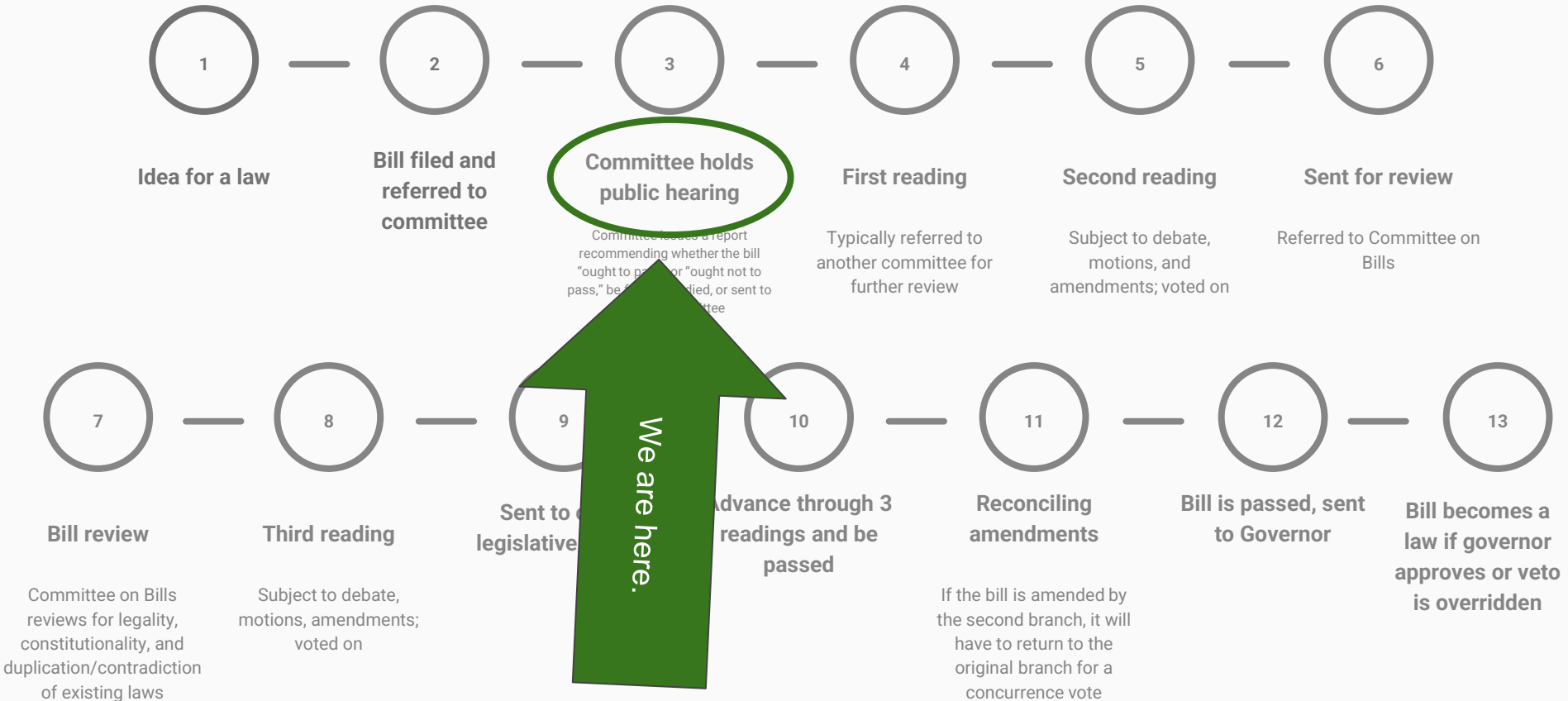
Session is Underway

- Battery EPR bills filed in House and Senate
 - S.556 - Sen. Cynthia Creem
 - H.968 - Rep. Kate Hogan
- Bills assigned to the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

Other Bills

- Paint: H.886/S.647
 - Packaging & Printed Paper: S.571
 - Mattresses: H.1023/S.614
 - Electronics: H.1015/S.653
-
- City of Cambridge sent letter in support of these bills to State's Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources on May 6, 2025.

Massachusetts Legislative Process



Ways to Take Action

- Stay engaged with MassPSC
 - Attend MassPSC bi-monthly meetings
 - Look for updates in the MassRecycle newsletter