



March 20, 2016

The Honorable Sylvester Turner
City of Houston
P.O. Box 1562
Houston, TX 77251

Dear Mayor Turner:

The city of Houston's proposed decision to remove glass from its curbside recycling program is alarming, and sure to be unpopular with Houston residents. Not only is glass an optimal packaging choice made from natural materials, it is infinitely and 100 percent recyclable.

Elimination of glass from the curbside collection program would result in unintended consequences for a service your residents want. **On behalf of the glass container industry, we respectfully request the city of Houston to reconsider the proposed contract and its impact on Houstonians for the important reasons below.**

Houston has publicly pledged to become a leader in sustainability on many fronts. Removing glass from curbside recycling is a giant step backwards for the city's new 96-gallon curbside recycling program and its recycling goals. Under the proposed contract, the city will potentially lose 20 percent of its recyclables to landfill, after a major investment to keep them out.

Keeping glass in the bin is an investment Houston should continue to make. According to published accounts of this contract, it would still cost less than 15 cents per person each month to recycle glass in the city of Houston. This is a small fraction of the total cost of the program, and a small price to pay to keep this valuable, endlessly recyclable resource out of landfills. It's what residents expect.

Yes, residents want to recycle glass – a recent national poll by SurveyUSA showed that 90 percent of Americans say it is important to recycle materials rather than send them to the landfill and 95 percent want glass to continue to be collected in their recycling programs. Removing glass from the curbside recycling program will be confusing to residents who overwhelmingly want and have grown used to recycling glass and expect their city to provide them with that option.

Under the proposed contract, the city will most likely pay increased landfilling costs for glass now put in garbage bins, as well as any glass that may still end up in many recycling carts. Houston's primary landfill operator and recycling service provider will also share in the estimated additional \$25,000 per month in "tipping fees" for the increase in glass sent to landfill disposal at their facilities. The vast majority of this will be a new cost for the city, making the reported savings much less than \$900,000 per year.

Thousands of U.S. communities – including all of the other major cities in Texas – now collect their recyclables via one-bin, curbside collection programs, which is convenient for residents and results in higher rates of collected recyclables. Actions in other communities have shown that residents complain and react negatively towards decision makers and companies who pare back this service, enjoyed by over 80 percent of Americans. The short-term savings gains of removing glass from the bin leads to long-term confusion regarding the effectiveness of recycling programs.

The goal should be to return recycled glass to its highest use as bottles, jars, and fiberglass wherever possible, while providing alternatives where it makes the most sense. Texas is home to two glass container plants, three fiberglass facilities and three glass recycling operations, providing infrastructure and outlets for the collected glass. Residents simply do not want recyclable material to be disposed in unneeded landfills.

The Glass Packaging Institute (GPI) is currently working with a variety of stakeholders in the glass recycling supply chain to improve the output and quality from recycling recovery facilities in order to help communities keep glass in the recycling bin. Instead of removing glass from Houston’s curbside programs, GPI and the glass container industry would like the opportunity to work with the city and the recycling service provider to address glass recycling.

We ask the city to reconsider and give Houston residents what they want -- a sustainable, full-service, inclusive single-stream program which is highly popular in Houston today.

I would be happy to further discuss recycling, and its importance to the glass container industry with you or your staff if it would help in your decision-making process. I can be reached at 703-684-6359, lbragg@gpi.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lynn M. Bragg". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped "L" and "B".

Lynn M. Bragg
President

CC: Council Members, City of Houston