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Testimony in Support of Assembly Bill 943

Assembly Committee on State Affairs

February 9, 2022

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and committee members. Thank you for holding this public hearing today on Assembly Bill (AB) 943 which would require the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to contract for the cleanup of contaminated glass and other electronic waste materials left behind by 5R Processors. I would like to thank Senator Petrowski, Representative Gundrum, and my other co-authors for working with me on this important legislation.

5R Processors was an electronics recycling company formerly based in Ladysmith, Wisconsin. Investigations of this company by the DNR and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) discovered a great deal of illegal activity on the part of 5R, including the storing of hazardous waste at unpermitted facilities, transporting hazardous waste without the required manifest, and concealing these violations from state regulators both in Wisconsin and Tennessee. This led to the federal prosecution of several of the company's leaders by the U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Wisconsin.

While most of the legal matters surrounding 5R have been resolved, what remains is millions of pounds of electronic waste without a responsible party to clean it up. The electronic waste from 5R is currently contained in several semi-trailers and warehouse facilities located in Rusk, Price and Washington Counties. Unless we do something it could fall to local governments and local taxpayers to clean this waste up which they cannot afford to do. That is the reason for this simple bill before you today.

AB 943 directs the DNR to contract with a third party for the removal and proper disposal of this waste using not more than \$2.5 million in segregated funds from the environmental management account. At the end of fiscal year 2022, the balance in this account is projected to be \$33.8 million. It is also important to note that because segregated funds are being used there is no impact on the federal maintenance of effort requirements.

Senator Petrowski's office worked with the DNR on this proposal in an effort to make it as easy as possible to administer this clean up and I thank them for their willingness to work to find a solution to this unfortunate situation

Mr. Chairman and members, I ask for your support of AB 943 and thank you again for the opportunity to testify before you today.