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House Energy & Environment Committee

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Mr. Chairman, Members of the House Energy and Environment,

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2535. Waste Management of Kansas provides residential and commercial trash & recycling service throughout Kansas and operates two recycling facilities in Topeka and Kansas City metropolitan area.

Approximately one out of every 12 households includes someone that uses sharps in the United States. Accordingly, the safe and proper disposal of sharps is a very serious public safety issue. The improper disposal of medical syringes, hypodermic needles and other injection medications (collectively “sharps”) poses a very serious and costly hazard to families, communities, businesses and the individuals that handle the collection of recyclables.

Currently, individuals using medications that require injections are instructed to place needles or “sharps” in a rigid plastic container and disposed of in their household garbage. However, there are tremendous amounts of plastic containers with sharps that are being placed in the recycling carts and thereby transported to recycling facilities. When this occurs, these sharps are commingled with the recyclable materials, resulting in a safety hazard for the employees at the recycling facilities. As a result of the sharps in the plastic containers, the employees are exposed to the needles when these containers break open at the recycling plant, resulting in the sharps spilling onto the recycling sort lines. Furthermore, when sharps are exposed on the sort lines, production workers at the recycling facility must stop the entire operation process and implement proper retrieval and disposal techniques to ensure compliance with safety regulatory standards. When this happens, recycling facilities are often shut down for long periods of time to allow for the safe removal of the sharps.

With the passage of HB 2535, it will help raise awareness of the proper disposal of sharps and additional public awareness of safe disposal methods. Every year, billions of needles, syringes, and lancets are used across the country and it is important we in Kansas do our part to make sure we are disposing of them properly. When sharps end up in curbside recycling carts or bins, they pose a serious threat to our employees and workers.

Thank you for your consideration and we urge the committee to approve passage of HB 2535.