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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Center for Sustainable Behavior & Impact to Drive Improvement in Recycling Behavior and Boost Confidence in U.S. Recycling

Six Experts Serving as Launch Advisors

WASHINGTON, D.C. (August 3, 2022) – The Recycling Partnership announced today that it has launched The Center for Sustainable Behavior & Impact (“The Center”) to drive measurable improvement in residential recycling behavior and mobilize household participation in the circular economy. Human behavior is at the heart of any successful recycling program. The Recycling Partnership is taking the lead in helping people to overcome barriers to participation, pairing behavioral science with programs aimed at growing access.

"Engaging the public means first ensuring that all people have equitable access to recycling services," said **Keefe Harrison, CEO of The Recycling Partnership**. "As we reached over 100 million American households, we saw first-hand that there is a critical missing piece. We have a responsibility to make it easy, even enjoyable, for all Americans to fully participate. We will do just that, working in collaboration with our expert launch advisors to create and rapidly share innovative, evidence-based solutions with practitioners and stakeholders working across the circular economy on recycling, reuse, and reduction."

Each year, 15 million tons of household recyclables are lost to landfills because Americans are confused and lack confidence when it comes to recycling. The loss of 15 million tons of recyclable material is equivalent to 63 million metric tons of carbon dioxide; capturing this material would yield more than 17,500 jobs and \$834 million in landfill savings.

"Solving this challenge requires an evidence-based approach," said **Louise Bruce, Managing Director for the Center for Sustainable Behavior & Impact**. "By rigorously evaluating and disseminating our findings, we are making the Center the go-to hub for innovative, people-focused solutions that substantially improve recycling at every step of the consumer journey. With this, we hope to empower recycling leaders to optimize their programs, and advance circularity of the economy."

With founding support from the Walmart Foundation and Milliken & Company Charitable Foundation, The Recycling Partnership will leverage its network of community partnerships, comprehensive national database, deep expertise in recycling education, and established track record of improving underperforming recycling programs to propel positive change in recycling behavior. This change will be measured through both an increased capture of recyclable material and growth in household recycling participation.

“People are at the heart of our sustainability strategy, so supporting the Center for Sustainable Behavior & Impact was the right fit,” said **Milliken & Company President and CEO and Milliken & Company Charitable Foundation Board Chair, Halsey Cook**. “The Center’s work to build consumer confidence and equitably overcome barriers to residential recycling will become a critical element of our strategy to solve the plastics end-of-life challenge.”

“The Center is filling a gap in the flywheel of the circular economy, which includes circular design, infrastructure and behavior change,” said **Julie Gehrki, Vice President & COO of The Walmart Foundation**. “The Walmart Foundation is supporting the Center for Sustainable Behavior & Impact to identify key trends, attitudes, motivations, and barriers to circularity nationally, regionally, and locally. These insights will inform multiple tools to accelerate trust in and adoption of recycling, including a digital playbook that will be designed purposefully to improve community confidence in recycling and embed equity in circular initiatives.”

While Americans overwhelmingly support recycling with 80% saying it has a positive impact, when it comes to actually putting recyclables in the bin, one obstacle is lack of confidence. Through its inaugural Recycling Confidence Index, The Center uses behavioral science to gauge consumer confidence in recycling programs and identify the drivers of these beliefs. Half of those surveyed believe that the items they recycle are made into new things, suggesting that there is room to boost recycling confidence, but only 7% said they believed recycled items rarely or never become something new. Significantly, the survey found that the highest levels of confidence exist among those who receive the full spectrum of recycling communications and support, including convenient bins, recycling knowledge and information, and motivational messages. Where there is strong communication, information and support, consumers are most likely to trust that recycling works and that their personal behaviors have a genuine impact. *Click [here](#) to read more about the Recycling Confidence Index.*

The Center will initially focus on three areas: (i) deepening understanding of consumer barriers and sentiments toward recycling, (ii) scientifically testing different types of solutions to determine the most effective and scalable tactics that improve recycling behavior with different populations in the US., and (iii) creating a playbook and accompanying online tool to make best practices and key insights available to national, state, and local recycling leaders.

To support its initial phase The Center is working with six Launch Advisors; experts and practitioners in the fields of environmental research, behavioral science, community recycling program management and sustainability marketing to ensure that its research practices meet

the highest scientific standards, while rooted in the everyday challenges of local communities. The Launch Advisors are:

- Bridget Anderson, Deputy Commissioner of Recycling and Sustainability, NYC Department of Sanitation
- Jason Hale, Director of Operations, Ocean Plastics Asia, Systemiq
- Steve Raabe, Founder and President, OpinionWorks
- Suzanne Shelton, Founder, President, & CEO, Shelton Group
- Joseph Sherlock, Applied Behavioral Researcher, the Center for Advanced Hindsight at Duke University
- Cynthia Shih, Senior Advisor, Delterra

“The vast majority of Americans want to do the right thing and keep their waste out of landfills. Why, then, are diversion rates so low in some areas? We have real work to do to change this, and I’m proud to be part of the effort to solve this problem, before it’s too late,” said **Bridget Anderson, Deputy Commissioner of Recycling and Sustainability, NYC Department of Sanitation.**

About The Recycling Partnership

At The Recycling Partnership, we are solving for circularity. We mobilize people, data, and solutions across the value chain to unlock the environmental and economic benefits of recycling and a circular economy. We work on the ground with thousands of communities to transform underperforming recycling programs; we partner with companies to achieve packaging circularity, increase access to recycled materials, and meet sustainability commitments; and we work with government to develop policy solutions to address the systemic needs of our residential recycling system and advance a circular economy. We foster public-private partnerships and drive positive change at every step of the recycling and circularity process. Since 2014, we have diverted 770 million pounds of new recyclables from landfills, saved 968 million gallons of water, avoided more than 670,000 metric tons of greenhouse gases, and driven significant reductions in targeted contamination rates. Learn more at recyclingpartnership.org.