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Innovation is desperately needed in the recycling space

Fixing recycling will have a huge climate impact. Beyond the obvious benefits to reducing pollution, recycling reduces emissions in many ways - most notably, by drastically reducing the resources required to produce virgin feedstock. A few examples:
- Plastic production accounts for 8% of global oil consumption. It's the fastest-growing segment of oil demand (expected to double in the next 20 years). Using recycled plastic feedstock would drastically cut down on demand for oil.
- Aluminum production requires bauxite to be mined, shipped, refined, and smelted, which is extremely resource-intensive. Recycling aluminum is lossless and uses far fewer resources - e.g., 95% less energy vs producing from bauxite ore.
- Project Drawdown estimates that increasing the global recycling rate and using more recycled commodities would avoid 28.2 gigatons of CO2 equivalent emissions by 2050.

These numbers are focused on the climate benefit of using recycled feedstock, and exclude many other ways recycling reduces emissions. To name a few:
- Reduces emissions from landfills (115M metric tons of emissions annually in the US alone)
- Preserves natural ecosystems that are carbon sinks (read this article about the damaging impact of bauxite mining to make virgin aluminum)

Today's recycling system is very inefficient:
- The US could recycle 75% of its waste stream, but it currently recycles only 30%.
- 86M metric tons of recyclables are landfilled annually in the US alone.
- Only 6% of plastics are recycled. This is DOWN from 9% five years ago, indicating an urgent need to improve this industry.

There are several easy-to-implement solutions to immediately improve our state's recycling systems, but funding for such projects is often lacking. CEC could provide the resources needed to enhance our recycling infrastructure, an often overlooked but immensely important component of building our sustainable future.