



28 January 2019

Senator Michael Dembrow  
Environment and Natural Resources, Chair  
900 Court St. NE, S-407  
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Senate Bill 90 Support

Dear Senator Dembrow and Honorable Members of the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

The Surfrider Foundation is pleased to submit the following comments in support of SB 90 Relating to a restriction on restaurants providing single-use plastic straws to consumers. The Surfrider Foundation is a grassroots environmental organization dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of the world's oceans, waves, and beaches for all people, representing over 4,000 supporters, activists, and members in Oregon. As one of the nation's leading advocacy organizations working to mitigate the harms of plastic pollution, the Surfrider Foundation sincerely commends Senator Dembrow and Representatives Keny-Guyer, Schouten, Nosse, and Sanchez in responding to this significant environmental issue with a policy prescription.

Both globally and locally in Oregon, plastic straws are among the top 10 most commonly found items during beach cleanups. In the last 10 years, more than 4 million straws and stirrers have been removed during the [International Coastal Cleanup](#). We use a straw for less than an hour, but that straw persists in the environment for longer than our lifetime. In 2015, researchers found that at least 690 species worldwide on land and sea have encountered marine debris and 92% of encounters were with plastic<sup>1</sup>.

Many Oregonians don't actually need to use a plastic straw and there are plenty of alternatives to single-use plastic straws including stainless steel, bamboo, and glass. For restaurants, they can reduce the number of straws used by 40-60% simply by switching to a straws upon request policy. This not only creates a positive impact on the environment, but saves the business money as well. To ground truth this, Surfrider Foundation's Portland and Newport Chapters launched Ditch the Straw Programs in 2017 and have worked with more than 150 businesses to switch to a straws upon request policy. Both Chapters are taking a business-first approach and have received extremely positive responses from businesses and individuals.

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<sup>1</sup> Marine Pollution Bulletin, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0025326X14008571>

Here is some real data from #DitchTheStrawPDX businesses who have already moved to straws upon request:

- Portland Spirit estimated between 8,000-10,000 straws avoided per year through the change to straws upon request.
- New Seasons reports preventing over 100,000 straws by removing them from all of their coffee and smoothie bars in Portland.
- Porque No has dropped from using 32,000 straws per month to 2,000 per month.
- Besaws saw about an 80% drop in their straw usage and they now have reusable straws for their employees as well.
- Mad Hanna reported \$1,000 in cost savings between May and November 2018.

The Portland Chapter, building on their support with businesses, worked with the City of Portland to develop an ordinance addressing single-use plastic straws, stirrers, utensils, and condiment packaging. Surfrider participated in an extensive 6-month long stakeholder process in Portland to develop the ordinance with individuals from the distribution industry, restaurants and ADA human rights advocates alike. The Portland and Newport chapter's work alike have proven that there is a community desire on the consumer and business side to respond to plastic pollution and ensure Oregon becomes a leader in the growing movement to limit single-use plastics for the protection of the environment.

Given that most single-use plastic straws that end up in our environment are distributed by drive through and take-out restaurants, we support the broad definition of "restaurant" used in the bill that includes these establishments. Addressing the biggest source of littered single-use plastic straws will ensure that this Bill makes a measurable impact on reducing the number of single-use plastic straws distributed in Oregon, maximizing the positive environmental and economic impact by preventing litter.

Thank you for considering our comments on SB 90. We look forward to remaining engaged with this Bill as it moves through the legislative process.

Sincerely,



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