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Senate Committee on Energy and Environment  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Chair Beyer and Members of the Committee,

Good afternoon Chair Beyer, Vice Chair Findley, and members of the committee. My name is Paxton Rothwell and I live in NE Portland and I am an organizer with Sunrise PDX. I fully support SB 14, 581, and 582-1 and am encouraged that the legislature is discussing matters as important as non-deceptive labelling and plastic stewardship.

Growing up, my family was a rampant consumer of bottled water. We recycled our bottles of course, but I look back on the multiple hundreds of plastic bottles that I have personally used in my lifetime and I feel an immense guilt. If I had known that what I was using just one time was actually going to end up in a landfill for hundreds of years, I would have made a different decision.

The simple fact of the matter is this: the plastic companies wanted me to believe that what I was using was recyclable and therefore wasn't harmful to the environment.

I could talk for hours about how plastic corporations lobbied in the late 20th century to allow deceptive labelling on unrecyclable plastic. Or how plastics are not biodegradable and only break down into harmful microplastics that are killing sea life and have become embedded in every living being on the planet including you and I. I wholly believe the misdirecting labelling of plastics and misinformation campaign brought on by the plastic corporations is not only immoral, but is plainly evil.

By passing these bills and by strictly enforcing the penalties in these laws, the State can stop tolerating this deceit and help to move the needle in the right direction. These bills can help bring into the mainstream the truth about plastics - they are not economically recyclable and do not breakdown in a landfill.

Today and at the previous meetings I've heard many lobbyist groups speaking in opposition of these bills because of various difficulties in implementation. I think the most progressive things receive the most opposition because of how transformative they truly are. These companies do not want to have to do something different, but they will adapt just like we all adapted to this new digital world when the pandemic began almost a year ago. Humans are adaptable Senators, and it's high time we require polluting companies to adapt to a world where we believe waste is immoral.

During today's and previous meetings, there was a lot of concern and opposition to SB 581 due to complications in labelling laws across state lines. While it would be impractical for producers to label for Oregon specific packaging, I'd hope they'd simply take the approach that producers did in response to the labelling requirements for California's Prop 65. They could simply put a label reading "Check with your local recycler to see if this product is recyclable" onto every product they sold in or out of Oregon so they could be in compliance with the laws of multiple states.

During today's meeting there was a lot of concern in regards to the extent of packaging these bills cover. Packaging is truly everywhere, and plastic packaging reigns supreme. Just take a look in your fridge or pantry and tell me how many food items come in plastic packaging. At scale this is a truly disturbing amount of plastic used for packaging and I believe the packaging producers need a push to shift to a sustainable packaging model.

And regarding Senator Findley's previous comment about passing on the additional costs to consumers. Of course the producers would pass on the costs, that is the main function of Capitalism - to maximize profits. The real danger here for the plastics corporations is that placing non-deceptive labelling on products would fully expose that their business model is inherently damaging to the environment. My guess is that the public would respond with a decreased appetite for plastic products, cutting into the bottom line that the capitalist producers so desperately try and protect.

I urge you to pass SBs 14, 581, and 582-1 as written. I hope the various lobbyists speaking in opposition at these meetings don't convince you to turn a blind eye to the desperate need to reduce waste in Oregon. It's time to put an end to rampant and seemingly unending plastic pollution and I am ecstatic that Oregon is leading the way for other states to follow. As a citizen who is plugged into his community I can tell you that the people will back the State should any plastic producers try and sue away these progressive bills. By passing these, Oregon can be an example for how to live in harmony with the planet that gives us life everyday without asking for anything in return.

We are entering a new period of political common sense, one that will aim to protect the people and the planet above profits. Plastic producers and the petroleum industry as a whole have been endlessly polluting the planet for their profit and have been lying about the irreversible damages their products have caused to us all. In order to guarantee a liveable world for future generations we need to end our addiction to cheap, disposable plastic products today.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on these extremely important bills today. I know I can count on you to do the right thing for the planet and the people of Oregon.

Sincerely,  
Paxton Rothwell

