

Hello Committee Members,

I'm a graduate student studying sustainability leadership and education at Portland State University, as well as the Reuse (waste reduction) coordinator in the Campus Sustainability Office also at PSU. I recently graduated with a degree in Environmental Studies - Political Science from Reed College, focusing my research studies on creating effective, implementable sustainable policy at local and state levels. I also started and managed a recycling center as the Sustainability Coordinator of Reed College for 4 years. As you can tell, I know a lot about trash and what its doing to earth. And it scares me. I have the privilege of living as close to a zero waste lifestyle as I can, where I send nothing to landfill, very minimal to be recycled, and acquire all my things used. Not everyone can do this, and it takes extreme lifestyle modification not available to a lot of people. The system has to change.

We have to be able to keep our waste out of the landfill, and recycling is often actually landfilled because of extreme contamination. People want to do the right thing. In fact, "wishful recycling" is where people try to throw anything made of plastic or with a chasing arrows recycling symbol into their curbside recycling bin. What is accepted as recycling is complicated. I have spend the past 5 years trying to educate college communities on what they can recycle, and still contamination rates are extraordinary. I have spend weeks sorting huge dumpers of trash and recycling to collect data on and understand what is being incorrectly sorted, and it turns, almost everything is. We have to modernize our system to keep up with our world, and producers must simply stop providing customers with all this packaging that most people I've worked with say they absolutely don't want, but don't know how to get their products without it. Industries must help solve this problem by changing their plastic, non recyclable packaging to at least recycled packaging or correctly labeled when recyclable or not (better yet, forgoing plastic). Government must help industries and our recycling system by providing clarity to consumers on what really is recyclable right on the product itself. We need change and we need it fast. We cannot sustain earth at the rate of our current garbage production. Already around the globe millions literally live in garbage dumps (of waste that the US has exported...), salvaging and selling what they can to make a living. We can't afford for Oregon to be a giant landfill in 100 years for now. Every bit of water tested on earth has been positive for microplastics. We must help our earth heal and figure out modern ways to promote recycling so we are not stuck drinking and living in our own trash that we could have done something to prevent.

I strongly urge you to support SB 582, as well as all the other bills that will try to research and change our recycling systems for the better. Or, as a young adult, when all of my representatives are long out of government, I will have to be trying to solve this same problem but so much worse. There is no away. All of our trash and recycling has dire consequences for earth. Let's work together to fix it, starting with SB 582.

Thank you for helping to give my generation and the next a chance to live.  
Hayden