



Senator Lee Beyer, Chair
Senator Lynn Findley, Vice-Chair
Senate Committee on Energy and Environment
Oregon State Legislature 900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Chair Beyer, Vice-Chair Findley, and Members of the Committee:

The U.S. Public Interest Research Group (PIRG) would like to offer its general support for SB 582-1.

Waste, particularly disposable plastic, is cheap for producers but costly to the rest of us. As taxpayers we have to pay for trash collection and recycling. As citizens we're exposed to pollutants from excessive manufacturing and microplastics in our drinking water and food. Meanwhile our oceans and waterways are being bombarded with millions of tons of plastic pollution every year, killing wildlife and spreading disease.

What is the cost to the companies making these wasteful products? Zero. We need programs to not only alleviate the cost of waste management, but more importantly to hold producers responsible for creating such wasteful products in the first place. A program that does not aim to reduce waste is a program that allows producers to shirk that responsibility.

As detailed in the recent U.S. PIRG report [Break the Waste Cycle](#), effective producer responsibility programs can encourage waste reduction by setting reduction requirements and incentivising redesign for reuse, repair and refurbishment. Any fees levied should not favor lighter weight products, especially if those products--like most plastics--are non-recyclable and environmentally hazardous.

Additionally, programs must ensure accountability, transparency, and oversight. Polluters should not be allowed to write their own rules to maintain the status quo. Management of any program needs to represent and be represented by lawmakers, recyclers, and advocates alike.

Oregon is not alone in considering producer responsibility among its solutions for waste and recycling failures. In response to the growing calls from constituents, bills to establish such programs are gaining traction in nearly a dozen other states and at the federal level. The *Break Free From Plastic Pollution Act*, introduced last year in the U.S. Senate and House, is expected to be led by Oregon's own Senator Jeff Merkley in 2021.

SB 582-1 will help ensure that Oregon continues to be a part of the solution, not the problem.

Sincerely,

Alex Truelove
Zero Waste Director
U.S. PIRG