

From the Desk of
Senator
Janeen Sollman



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Environmental
Council



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Please vote YES on Senate Bill 545 to modernize Oregon's health code to allow for reuse and refill systems and cut down on wasteful single-use plastics

Many shoppers, and even businesses, are not aware that Oregon's health code currently does not allow for consumer or store-owned reusable containers to be used in restaurants for takeout. Senate Bill 545 would clarify existing rules and expand sanitary opportunities under the Oregon Health Authority's Code for consumers and businesses to transition away from single-use items.

SB 545 is a simple step towards enabling business and consumer freedoms to safely shift from single-use to reuse systems and opportunities to cut down on unnecessary waste. In 2018, the Department of Environmental Quality published a report showing that the four attributes of packaging materials that are popularly considered sustainable are in fact rarely if ever a better option than reusables. Yet, nearly 1 trillion disposable food service products are used every year in the United States. Oregon has embraced retail and restaurant code for reuse in the beverage industry for over a decade, it's time to bring our food systems up to speed.

On February 2, 2023 the Oregon Department of Agriculture officially adopted new rules for enabling reusable containers in retail establishments such as grocery stores and small cooperatives. SB 545 directs the Oregon Health Authority to undergo similar rulemaking updates to allow restaurant establishments, and their customers, to do the same.

The current code is unnecessarily prohibitive and is inconsistently enforced, creating cultural and business confusion about what is and isn't allowed. Oregonians use reusable containers for multiple reasons from financial and food accessibility to health and environmental reasons like the reduction of packaging and waste. Similarly, many businesses should have the freedom of developing their own systems for reuse and what they allow or don't allow. Arguably, many businesses and consumers have been operating under this premise for decades.

This policy is a straightforward and necessary action to modernize Oregon's restaurant code and their respective rules. This is about business freedom, consumer freedom and simple opportunities to better enable reuse so we can help Oregon rise above plastic pollution.

Please help reduce plastic waste and vote YES on Senate Bill 545.