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February 14, 2023

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

RE: SB 543, SB 544, and SB 545 - Support

Chair Sollman and Members of the Committee,

The Association of Oregon Recyclers (AOR) is a 501(c)6 committed to supporting policies that reduce waste and promote high-quality recycling and composting. We believe materials should be managed according to their highest and best use of reduce, reuse, recycle. Our principles around equity and the environment are why AOR believes Senate Bill 543, Senate Bill 544 and Senate Bill 545 are key plastic reduction bills in the 2023 legislative session.

Robust waste reduction education programs have been in place throughout the the State of Oregon since recycling collection began in some communities nearly 30 years ago. Despite great efforts, waste generation continues to increase in the United States while the world is also experiencing a massive increase in plastic production and pollution. The plastics crisis is complex and even with modernized waste systems, recycling alone will not suffice to address these issues.

SB 543 will put in place a statewide ban on polystyrene foam ware for takeout food. Products made of polystyrene foam are not recyclable in curbside programs and often end up as litter in our open spaces, rivers and oceans. The foam breaks down into small pieces that harm wildlife and aquatic animals and there are more environmentally friendly alternatives. This is a policy that has already been in place for more than 30 years in the City of Portland. Prohibiting the use of polystyrene foam ware for takeout food is a policy AOR believes is long overdue for Oregon.

Waste prevention is also a critical strategy for reducing plastic waste. SB 545 would update our health code to enable customers to bring reusable and refillable containers for food reducing take out container waste. Oregonians have always had a strong recycling ethic because they want to do their part to preserve our environment and that is why we have one of the highest recycling rates in the country. Legalizing reusables would provide people with another tool to reduce their impact by conserving natural resources. This combined with a 25% plastic

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reduction target proposed in SB 544 would demonstrate Oregon's leadership and commitment to plastics reduction.

The best available science is indisputable about the need for concrete and immediate efforts to address plastic pollution. Time is short and we need to act now and help prevent more damage to the environment and human health. SB 543, SB 544 and SB 545 are part of the solution and will help protect Oregon from plastic pollution and that is why the Association of Oregon Recyclers urges your support.

Sincerely,

Joel Schoening

Chair, Association of Oregon Recyclers

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