



February 14th, 2023

**RE: SUPPORT for Senate Bills 543, 544 & 545**

Dear Chair Sollman, Vice-Chair Findley and Members of the Committee,

We strongly support Senate Bill 543, Senate Bill 544 & Senate Bill 545 aimed at tackling plastic pollution at the source by requiring reductions in the use of single-use plastic packaging and foodware and allowing for reusable and refillable containers in Oregon. Today, nearly 40% of the plastic produced annually is for single-use plastics and packaging, a sector that expanded rapidly as a result of a global shift from reusable to single-use containers.

Recycling alone cannot solve the plastics crisis. Even a robust recycling system cannot keep pace with the ballooning production of plastics. Only about 9% of all plastic ever produced has been recycled, 12% has been burned, and the remaining 79% has ended up in landfills or the environment. Most plastic packaging and foodware is not accepted in curbside recycling programs and often contaminates streams of otherwise recyclable material. Plastics place a huge financial and environmental burden on local communities throughout their lifecycle from production to disposal.

The real solution must be reduction. Recycling is like trying to mop water from an overflowing bathtub while the faucet is still running. We need to turn off the faucet and reduce the production of single-use plastic. But that's not what's happening. Production is going through the roof, leading to a constant accumulation of plastic waste, which places a huge financial burden on local communities that often bear the costs to clean up plastic waste. Without immediate changes to the way we use plastics, the total amount of plastic waste generated is expected to double in the next five years.

Globally, 33 billion pounds of plastic enter the marine environment every year, devastating the world's oceans. Plastic does not go away, instead it breaks into smaller pieces that can be mistaken for food by marine life. Plastics have been found everywhere we've looked; from the deepest trenches of the ocean to the rain in the Rocky Mountains and in our bodies. Oregon is not immune to these impacts. Plastics have been found in Pacific oysters and rockfish off our coast. Plastic pollution is not exclusively a coastal problem. In 2021, Environment Oregon did a [survey](#) of 30 waterways in Oregon and found microfibers and/or microplastic particles in every single waterway they looked at -- from the Willamette, Rogue and Deschutes Rivers to Wallowa Lake and Crater Lake and everywhere in between.

Most plastics are made from fossil fuels and are a significant source of global greenhouse gas emissions contributing to climate change, sea level rise and ocean acidification. If plastics were a country, it would be the 5th largest emitter of greenhouse gasses. Simply put, we cannot meet our climate goals without reducing our reliance on single-use and disposable plastics.

Additionally, chemical migration of toxic chemicals from food packaging and containers can make their way into our food and drink, increasing the chances of cancer, endocrine disruption, and fertility issues.

You have an opportunity to address these issues head on through three pieces of legislation:

- SB 543 would prohibit the use of polystyrene foam foodware including bowls, plates, cups, lids, clamshells, or other containers and prohibit the sale of polystyrene foam packing peanuts and coolers by January 1, 2025. The bill would also prohibit the use of toxic forever chemicals in foodware containers.
- SB 544 would require producers to reduce the amount of single-use plastic packaging and foodware by 25% by 2030 and move to reusable and refillable packaging.
- SB 545 would update our health code to enable customers to bring reusable and refillable containers for food.

We strongly urge you to vote for SB 543, SB 544, and SB 545 to tackle plastic pollution at the source for the betterment of our environment and our communities.

Sincerely,

Joel Schoening  
Chair  
**Association of Oregon Recyclers**

Lisa Arkin  
Executive Director  
**Beyond Toxics**

Carolyn Stein  
Executive Director  
**BRING**

Quinn Read  
Oregon Policy Director  
**Center for Biological Diversity**

Amy van Saun  
Senior Attorney  
**Center for Food Safety**

Meredith Connolly  
Oregon Director  
**Climate Solutions**

Kirsten Lee  
Volunteer  
**Community for Earth, First Unitarian Portland**

Sarah Cloud  
Executive Director  
**Deschutes River Alliance**

Celeste Meiffren-Swango  
State Director  
**Environment Oregon**

Mary Peveto  
Executive Director  
**Neighbors for Clean Air**

Dr. Anja Brandon  
Associate Director, U.S. Plastics Policy  
**Ocean Conservancy**

Tara Brock  
Pacific Counsel  
**Oceana**

Jamie Pang  
Environmental Health Program Director  
**Oregon Environmental Council**

Julia DeGraw  
Coalition Director  
**Oregon League of Conservation Voters**

Carina Perez Europa  
Clean Air Organizer  
**Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility**

Charlie Fisher  
State Director  
**OSPIRG**

Hibah Hammad  
State Board Chair  
**OSPIRG Students**

Joe Liebezeit  
Interim Statewide Conservation Director  
**Portland Audubon**

Emily Bowes  
Conservation Director  
**Rogue Riverkeeper**

Charlie Plybon  
Oregon Policy Manager  
**Surfrider Foundation**

Lindsey Hardy  
Energy and Waste Program Director  
**The Environmental Center**

Tara Knierim  
Board Vice President  
**Waste-Free Advocates**