



February 14, 2023

Senator Sollman, Chair
Senate Committee on Energy & Environment
Oregon Legislature

Re: Environment Oregon strongly supports Senate Bill 543, Senate Bill 544 and Senate Bill 545

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

Environment Oregon is a statewide, member-based environmental advocacy organization working for clean air, clean water, open space and a liveable climate, representing tens of thousands of members across Oregon. We are writing in strong support of Senate Bill 543, Senate Bill 544 and Senate Bill 545 as critical opportunities for Oregon to stem the tide of plastic pollution.

Look around your kitchen, walk around your favorite park or beach and you'll likely find yourself in the presence of plastic. The United States produces enough plastic waste every 16 hours to fill Cowboys Stadium, the largest football stadium in the country. We eat about a credit card's worth of plastic every week because microplastics are so omnipresent in our environment. If our waste patterns continue, by 2050 the oceans could have more plastic than fish.

Our country and world's addiction to plastic is a growing problem, responsible for country-sized swirling gyres of plastic waste in our oceans and growing landfills in our country's interior. This pollution is damaging our ecosystems and endangering public health.

Plastics are also bad for our climate. The plastic industry emits an enormous amount of greenhouse gas emissions: between manufacturing, use, and disposal, the U.S. plastics industry was responsible for at least [232 million tons of CO₂e gas emissions](#) in 2020, equivalent to the average emissions from 116 average-sized (500-megawatt) coal-fired power plants. Soon, by 2030, plastics production may even [surpass emissions](#) from coal.

Ultimately, we need to turn off the plastic tap, or the problem is going to get exponentially worse. To reduce the amount of plastic waste that ends up in our environment, we need to dramatically reduce the amount of disposable plastic products handed to consumers every day. Many of these items are unnecessary and easily replaceable. Ultimately, we need to transition away from single-use products to reusable and refillable alternatives wherever possible.

We are making progress in Oregon. In 2019, the Oregon legislature passed the sustainable shopping initiative and phased out wasteful single-use plastic grocery bags, encouraging Oregonians to bring their own reusable bags. In 2021, the Oregon legislature passed the Recycling Modernization Act, making

Oregon the second state in the country to establish a producer responsibility program for packaging and paper products, which will bring producers in to start bearing some of the costs of the waste management system through a shared responsibility model. I am honored to serve as Vice Chair of the Recycling Council to help oversee the implementation of the Recycling Modernization Act, and that work is already underway.

But our work to address plastic pollution is not over. We still have a lot of work to do to get rid of some of the most unnecessary single-use plastics, reduce plastic at the source and make sure we are making it easier for Oregon businesses and residents to shift away from using single-use containers to reusable and refillable systems. That's why we support:

Senate Bill 543: Phasing out polystyrene foam foodware and PFAS in food packaging

One of the most wasteful single-use plastics is polystyrene foam, which is typically not reused, is not accepted in curbside recycling and is one of the top items found polluting Oregon's beaches. SB 543 would ban polystyrene foodware, coolers and packing peanuts, as well as phasing out PFAS, a toxic "forever chemical," from food packaging, which has been linked to thyroid, kidney, and ovarian cancers.

Senate Bill 544: Reducing plastic at the source

SB 544 would require producers to reduce the amount of single-use plastic packaging and foodware by 25% over the next decade. If your bathtub is overflowing, you wouldn't start by bailing out the water, you'd start by turning off the tap. We need to turn off the plastic tap and reduce the amount of single-use plastics entering the market in the first place, resulting in less plastic production, less greenhouse gas emissions, and less pollution.

Senate Bill 545: Enabling reuse

SB 545 would establish legal reusable and refillable systems and opportunities under Oregon's Health Code for consumers and businesses to transition away from harmful single-use items.

We urge you to pass Senate Bill 543, Senate Bill 544 and Senate Bill 545 to help Oregon rise above plastic and build a cleaner, greener future for all Oregonians.

Sincerely,

Celeste Meiffren-Swango
State Director