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February 14, 2023

RE: Written Testimony for Senate Bill 544

Dear Senator Sollman and the Committee on Energy and Environment,

We are writing today on behalf of Waste-Free Advocates, a 501(c)(3) organization that is dedicated to encouraging Oregonians to create a sustainable future by empowering and connecting communities to minimize over-consumption and waste. We are writing today in strong support of Senate Bill 544. Plastic pollution is one of the major issues of our time, and it is imperative that we take strong, decisive action to curtail the use of single-use plastic.

Forty percent of the plastic that is created today is for single-use. Only about 9% of plastic ever produced has been recycled and 12% has been burned. This has led to a massive waste problem with the remaining 79% of plastic ending up in the landfill or the environment.

The truth is that recycling can never address this plastic pollution problem. The only real viable option is reduction; however, that is not what is happening. Production is through the roof, leading to a constant accumulation of plastic waste, which places a huge financial burden on local communities, particularly low income and BIPOC communities, that often bear the costs and environmental hazards 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.

Much of the plastic used today is unnecessary. This proposed law would help to curtail the use of this unnecessary plastic and require producers to reduce the amount of single-use plastic packaging and foodware by 25% by 2030 and move to reusable and refillable packaging. This fits nicely with the Plastic Pollution and Recycling Modernization Act passed in 2021. While the goal could be much more ambitious,

like the ban on single-use plastic recently announced in the United Kingdom, this is a good start to fix the problem.

Environmental groups have recommended reducing and reusing since the 1970s. However, this is not happening on a large enough scale with regard to the reduction of plastic. We must mandate it.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our views and our support for Senate Bill 544. We urge the committee to support this bill to help to stem the massive tide of single use plastic pollution.

Sincerely,

Waste-Free Advocates Board or Directors and our member coalition of environmental advocates

Julia Bonnheim, Resource Director

Brittney Wendell, Board President

Tara Knierim, Board Vice President

Haley Robinson, Board Treasurer

Jessica Zahn, Board Secretary

Michael Freudenthal, Board Member At-Large

Alaina Labak, Board Member At-Large

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Adrienne Wallace, Board Member At-Large