



**TO:** Chair Sollman, Vice-Chair Findley, and Committee Members  
**FR:** Alyssa Rueda, Environmental Justice Projects Assistant, Beyond Toxics  
Meet Panchal, Statewide Environmental Justice Project Manager, Beyond Toxics  
**DT:** February 14, 2023

**RE: Testimony to the Senate Committee on Energy & Environment in Support of SB 544**

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

On behalf of Beyond Toxics, a state-wide environmental justice nonprofit, and thousands of our supporters across the state, we are writing to express our strong support of SB 544—a bill requiring producers to establish programs that will reduce the amount of single-use plastic packaging and foodware to achieve 25% source reductions by 2030 compared to 2023 levels. Beyond Toxics has been an active public interest participant in policy decisions related to public health for more than twenty years. Our organization emphasizes environmental justice and community engagement. Passing SB 544 is a necessary step in prioritizing human health by reducing the amount of single-use packaging and foodware that would enter our landfills.

In recent times, the responsibility of reducing single-use plastics and foodware has been placed on the consumer. We have been convinced for years that single-use plastics are a necessity in this fast-paced, consumer driven culture that corporations force on us. They offer us false disposable plastic solutions like recycling as a solution to the massive amounts of disposable plastic waste, when most single-use plastic is simply burned and contributes to greenhouse gas emissions. This waste adds to our landfills—only 9% of plastic waste gets recycled. The rest is either burned or dumped.<sup>1</sup> Landfills are overflowing with not only trash but also leachate run-off, methane release and carbon dioxide release. All of which contribute to poor air, water and soil quality. Landfills and production industry have historically been placed in communities of color and/or of lower income. Therefore, the production of single-use plastic packaging and food ware is not only a climate issue but also a justice issue.

The life cycle of single-use packaging and food ware starts with its production. Plastic products require resource extraction, mass production, and distribution—all of which are wrapped up in different modes of pollution. Plastic is produced from extracted crude oil and natural gas, which are both nonrenewable fossil fuels. To produce just one kilogram of plastic from crude oil it

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.greenpeace.org/africa/en/blogs/11670/recycling-is-a-false-solution-to-plastic-pollution/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://northamericanforestfoundation.org/energy-costs/#:~:text=>

takes 62-108 megajoules. Plastic is the least energy efficient material to produce compared to other materials.<sup>2</sup> The intention for single-use packaging and food ware is to use once or a few times then disposed of. This life cycle is not a practice that can be sustained at the rate that we are going.

Reduction at the source must be a part of the solution. Oregon has already taken steps to reduce plastic waste at the source, but there is much more to do. SB 544 will require the continual and gradual reduction of plastic waste for the next decade. Reduction is a joint effort between consumers and producers. Most consumers are well aware of the part they play, SB 544 will ensure that producers are also aware of the part they play.

Beyond Toxics strongly urges the Senate Committee on Energy & Environment to support SB 544 and take necessary action to protect Oregonians by reducing single-use plastic packaging and food ware at the source.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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