

Submitter: Laurie Dougherty

On Behalf Of: 350 Salem OR

Committee: House Committee On Climate, Energy, and Environment

Measure: SB543

Chair Marsh, Vice-Chairs Levy and Levy, and members of the House Committee on Climate, Energy and Environment,

350 Salem OR is very pleased that SB 543-A passed in the Oregon Senate. We are the local affiliate of international climate justice network 350.org. At the state level we work in collaboration with climate and environmental organizations to advocate for measures that will end the dominance of fossil fuels and their destructive effects at every stage from production to use. SB 543-A is a good step in that direction.

Plastics, produced from fossil fuels (petroleum or natural gas), are a source of greenhouse gas emissions from extraction and transportation as well as from energy-intensive manufacturing processes. With the depletion of conventional sources, fracking (hydraulic fracturing) is increasingly used to extract oil and is now the most common method of producing natural gas in North America. Fracking chemicals pollute land and water. Referencing research in the May 2019 issue of Nature Climate Change, Beyond Plastics and others point out that “If plastic were a country, it would be the world’s fifth largest greenhouse gas emitter, beating out all but China, the U.S., India and Russia.”\*

Plastics are a major source of toxic pollution and waste. Polystyrene foam,\*\*, used in food and beverage containers and packaging is made from styrene which is a carcinogen and is linked to other health problems. It cannot be recycled. Although it does not easily biodegrade and lasts in the environment for centuries, it leaches toxic chemicals, especially when heated, such as in contact with hot drinks and food. Although its stiffness makes it useful as a container, it is brittle and crumbles into smaller and smaller bits that litter roadways, parks, and beaches. Polystyrene foam is one of the most common kinds of trash found during beach cleanups. Lightweight, it floats down storm drains and streams, and is a major source of contamination in the ocean, harming fish and birds that mistake the small foam bits for food.

Reusable containers are a good alternative. Ashland, Eugene, Florence, Lincoln City, Medford, Milwaukie, Newport, Portland, and Silverton have passed ordinances banning polystyrene food containers.

We urge you to support SB 543-A to extend this ban to the whole state.  
Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Laurie Dougherty

Co-Coordinator 350 Salem OR

\*Beyond Plastics Report October 2021 Forward p4

\*\*Styrofoam is a trademarked form of polystyrene foam.\*