



Oregon Zoo
Together for Wildlife

RE: Support for Phasing Out Polystyrene - SB 543 A

Chair Marsh, Vice-Chairs Levy and Levy, Members of the Committee,

Metro and the Oregon Zoo support SB 543 A.

Metro is the regional government of the Portland metropolitan area, with major responsibility for managing the region's solid waste and providing opportunities for recycling and waste reduction. We serve a population of almost 1.7 million, providing services and educational resources that protect the environment and reduce the amount and toxicity of the solid waste stream. Metro is also the governing body of the Oregon Zoo, which values wildlife and environmental conservation.

The rapid rise of plastic production has created a global plastic waste crisis. Plastic pollution is a growing threat to the health of marine and land-based wildlife, ecosystems and humans. A reduction in plastic production will only be achievable through the combined efforts of consumers, businesses and governments. SB 543 A would phase out polystyrene. In the Metro region, both the City of Portland and the City of Milwaukie have ban polystyrene to-go containers. We are excited to see an individual city policy expanded across the region, but more importantly the state.

From a solid waste management perspective, Metro supports waste prevention and reduction. We know that reducing waste upstream by modifying people's behavior is more beneficial to the environment than disposal even if it is recycling. Oregon has one of the highest rates of recycling in the country, but polystyrene is hard to recycle as it is often contaminated with food and not eligible for curbside recycling, so it ends up in a landfill. Every year, tons of Oregon's recycling was dumped into landfills, in part due to contamination from non-recyclable plastics. Things like polystyrene and other single use plastics tend to break down into smaller and smaller pieces and contribute to litter.

From a conservation perspective, the environmental impacts of plastic pollution are substantial. The Oregon Zoo believes that reducing the sources of plastic pollution will protect the health of wildlife, people and the ecosystems we depend on. From a conservation perspective, the environmental impacts of plastic pollution are substantial. Plastic poses a threat to the majority of sea turtle, marine mammal, and seabird species, whether by ingestion or entanglement. Plastic microtrash threatens California condors, which the Zoo is working really hard to rehabilitate back from near extinction.

Historically, microtrash and microplastics have prevented condor chicks from digesting food, resulting in starvation and death. The California condor had a hard time surviving in the wild and was the first species to be listed under the Endangered Species Act in 1973. By 1987, the entire wild population had been reduced to 22 wild birds. Condors used to soar in many parts of southern Oregon, on the coast and other parts of Oregon. There are now more than 500 condors in the WORLD, most flying free. Since 2004, 51 Oregon Zoo condors have been released into wild areas, however, the species existence still relies heavily on rehabilitation efforts like the one at the Oregon Zoo.

The Oregon Zoo would like to see California condors once again soar over the Pacific Northwest, but it is not simply a matter of releasing birds into their historic range. A successful reintroduction

hinges on protecting the released birds from premature death. Until the problem of microplastics is greatly reduced or resolved, condors will not be fully recovered in the wild.

Reducing single-use plastics and banning polystyrene will yield less waste and contaminated recyclables for the waste streams while protecting fish, wildlife and the environment.

We urge your support on SB 543 A.

Sincerely,

Jenna Jones
State and Regional Affairs Advisor
Metro