



February 23, 2021

Chair Beyer, Vice-Chair Findley, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) of Oregon, we express our support for Senate Bill 581.

Confusion reigns when it comes to deciding whether an item is recyclable or not, and we routinely find ourselves either putting recyclable materials in the trash or nonrecyclable materials in recycle bins. This situation cannot continue unabated.

This problem is particularly acute regarding the use of plastics, and in particular, single use plastics. Since the 1950's, 8.3 billion metric tons of plastics have been produced, and half of that in the past 15 years. Three million tons of plastic are produced each year, half of which is for single-use items. That's nearly equivalent to the weight of the entire human population.¹

Microplastics that are generated when plastic breaks down now permeate every corner of our planet. It is well documented that the ever-multiplying spread of these items poses significant health risks for humans, wildlife and the environment itself.

Industry representatives admit the current recycling system is problematic and needs to be addressed. They also claim that at present there is no single solution to the problem. This assertion may be true, but the packaging industry has had more than sufficient time to arrive at solutions. They are also key purveyors of the problems.

A single, universal solution to recycling seems to be a laudable goal, but that approach significantly prolongs, if not precludes, the time when recycling will be done as it should be. It also implicitly represents an effort to shift responsibility to governmental agencies and away from the recycling industry itself.

In recognition of these concerns, SB 581's requirement of truth-in-recycling and the power of individuals to pursue legal redress only applies to products sold on or after January 1, 2023.

We respectfully submit that now is the time to define a reasonable structure, as is articulated in SB 581, to accomplish the environmental goals we Oregonians must strive for and attain.

*Trish Garner, J.D., M.S.W. State Public Policy Chair,
American Association of University Women of Oregon
garner37@mac.com*

¹Courtney Lindwall, *Single Use Plastics 101*, NRDC, 9 January 2020, <https://www.nrdc.org/stories/single-use-plastics-101>