

To: Senate Committee on Energy and Environment
From: Rich Schwartz, Portland, OR 97214
Date: February 22, 2021
Subject: SB 582, Modernizing Oregon's Recycling System

I am writing in support of SB 582. As a longtime Oregon resident I have gone from being proud of the state's leadership on recycling to being dismayed and frustrated over the current practices and efficacy of the system. While most of us here in Portland love our blue recycling bins and strive to prevent recyclable materials from entering the waste stream, we are often confused about what does and does not belong in that container. This is especially true when it comes to packaging in general, and plastic packaging in particular. When people see the triangular recycling symbol on the bottom of plastic packaging they assume that means it's ok to put it in the recycling bin. This results in a high degree of contamination which greatly increases the costs and decreases the efficiency of the system.

DEQ has been aware of this problem for a while now. To address the issue, they convened multiple stakeholders in a 2 year process that led to SB 582. While this may not be the bill that I would have introduced if I were king, I believe it justly distributes responsibility among the various stakeholders for improving the system and greatly reducing the materials that end up in our dwindling landfills. I especially applaud efforts to improve labeling, increase communication and education of the public, and compel the packaging industry to participate in and fund a solution to a problem that they have created. I urge you to pass this important step towards creating a clean and healthy Oregon.