

Submitter: Shari Harris-Dunning  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Energy and Environment  
Measure: SB544

Hello to esteemed members of the Senate,

While Oregonians are excellent at recycling, and recycling is an important means to keeping discards from reaching our landfills, recycling does not keep pace with the production and use of plastics. Furthermore, recycling by itself is not the solution to solving the plastics crisis that we are facing. Plastic discards pollute our environment; plastic bags are ingested by marine life, causing injuries and death. Microplastics can be found at every level of the food chain, including ourselves. According to a March 2022 article in The Guardian (Microplastics found in human blood for the first time), scientist have found microplastic pollution in almost 80% of the people that were tested.

Even with increased recycling rates of plastic in Oregon, recycling alone will never keep pace with the production of plastics, and in particular one-use plastics. The analogy of trying to stop an overflowing bathtub by using a teaspoon to clean up the flood before shutting down/off the tap is applicable to plastics. The only solution to stop plastic pollution is to address it at the source through the reduction of single-use plastics.

We know that last year, in the summer of 2022, the California legislature passed the strongest source reduction policy in the nation. If California can pass strong legislation targeting single-use plastics, Oregon can certainly do the same. SB 544 would place three critically important mandates on producers of single-use plastic packaging and foodware; specified reduction by weight and number, a portion of that through elimination, reuse or refillable products or packaging, and determination by the EQC whether single-use foodware or packaging is necessary. This is an excellent start to addressing the plastics crisis and I urge you to pass this legislation.

Thank you,  
Shari Harris-Dunning