

Natalie Break up with Plastics Testimony

"Chair Sollman, Vice-Chair Findley and members of the committee, for the record my name is Natalie and I am a Freshman at University of Oregon, I study Environmental Science and I am an intern with OSPIRG Students at the University of Oregon.

OSPIRG Students is a student run, student funded advocacy organization here on campus. I am working with the beyond plastic campaign working to ban polystyrene in the state of Oregon.

Polystyrene is the foam takeout cups and containers that harm our environment, pollute our land and last for a very long time. The foam cups and containers are singly used and don't break down. Because of this, 70 million foam cups are thrown away in the US every single day. Of these, about one third end up in waterways and most of the remaining waste will spend hundreds and thousands of years sitting in landfills. These plastics never fully break down, and are instead broken into smaller pieces called microplastics that have been ingested by hundreds of different species, including us. Because plastic foam takes hundreds of years to degrade, every piece will continue to pollute and threaten ecosystems for centuries. We need to stop that. Using other options such as; paper or reusable containers are a big solution to polystyrene. Getting companies to stop using polystyrene also can make a big impact. We already know that students and the Eugene community really care about this issue, having already banned polystyrene within our city. Reengaging those existing supporters and thinking bigger about the future of our state will help tremendously.

I grew up going to an animal rehabilitation center in Long Beach, California and when I was there I learned about the environmental problems caused by humans on coastal species and how humans are the problem and most of the time it was because of our plastic waste. Growing up and going to this rehabilitation center changed my mindset on our planet and the state we are in. My mindset changed by learning about how harmful humans have been to the planet and how there are small actions we can take to cut single use plastic out of our lives. At the gift shop at the rehabilitation center I have purchased a metal straw that I take with me and a silverware set I have on hand as well. This is one small step I take to not use single use plastics. It also made me decide to get a degree in environmental science. So I decided to join this campaign because many animals are suffering and I want to help.

Reducing plastic pollution is important to Oregon students and residents. We hope that the Oregon legislature finally passes a ban on polystyrene this session and takes other actions to help move our state away from single use plastic like polystyrene. We want to be beyond plastic.