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RE: SUPPORT for Senate Bills 543, 544, 545

Dear Chair Sollman, Vice-Chair Findley and Members of the Committee,

We are writing to express our strong support for Senate Bills 543, 544, and 545, which collectively would address our plastic pollution crisis.

Every year, 11 million metric tons of plastics enter our ocean from land-based sources alone, much of which are single-use plastics, designed to be used once and then immediately discarded. While the ocean is the epicenter of the plastic pollution crisis, the impacts of plastic production, use, and pollution are extensive. Plastics have been found in the deepest part of the ocean, on the tallest peaks in our national parks, and in our own bodies. In the over 35 years Ocean Conservancy has led the International Coastal Cleanup® (ICC), more than 115,000 volunteers have removed over 1.4 million pounds of debris in Oregon alone.

One of the most insidious forms of plastic pollution is foam foodware, also known as expanded polystyrene (EPS). EPS is made by trapping tiny air bubbles inside plastic, resulting in a material that is about 95% air by volume. While this makes EPS lightweight and easily transportable, these same qualities also mean that foam is easily carried in the wind and dispersed as a pollutant, where it easily breaks up into thousands of microplastics. Foam microplastics are among the most common microplastic pollutants collected in the ICC.

In addition to polluting our ocean and our communities, plastics contribute to the climate crisis. By 2030, greenhouse gas emissions from plastic production are expected to reach 1.3 billion tons, equivalent to 300 coal-fired power plants. We can't solve our global climate crisis without addressing the plastic loophole.

Oregon has been a leader with the passage of the Recycling Modernization Act in 2021, one of the first extended producer responsibility policies for packaging in the country. However, the science is clear – to address our plastic pollution crisis we must do more, and that starts with reducing the amount of plastics we make and use.

Research coauthored by Ocean Conservancy and published in *Science* found that to reduce ocean plastic pollution to 2015 levels, we need to reduce plastic production by 25 – 40%, in addition to increasing circularity in waste management and targeted cleanups.¹

¹ Borrelle, S.B., et al. (2020). [Predicted growth in plastic waste exceeds efforts to mitigate plastic pollution](#). *Science* 369(6510), 1515-1518.

To tackle our plastic pollution and climate crises head on, we need to require a reduction in single-use plastics. SB 544 would result in a 25% reduction in the amount of single-use plastics in the state by 2030. The mandates laid out in the bill follow the scientific consensus on the imperative for plastic reduction and the precedent set last year in California² for how to incorporate source reduction into a comprehensive approach to tackling plastic pollution.

Working with my fellow scientists at Ocean Conservancy, we estimated that a 25% reduction in single-use plastics would eliminate roughly 1.1 million tons of single-use plastics in the state by 2030. That would result in nearly 6 million tons of CO₂-equivalent emissions avoided, roughly the same emissions produced by over 1 million gas-powered vehicles over the course of a year.

Transitioning from single-use plastics to reusable options is the most effective way to achieve a circular economy and a livable climate. SB 545 will ensure that all Oregonians have the safe and legal ability to use customer-owned, refillable containers under Oregon's Health Code.

In addition to reducing single-use plastics overall, we need to eliminate the most harmful and unnecessary plastics that are leading to outsized pollution impacts – starting with expanded polystyrene (EPS). SB 543 would follow the precedent set by eleven states and Washington, D.C. that have already passed legislation to ban or phase out EPS. Even members of the private sector recognize the need to transition away from this harmful material – the U.S. Plastics Pact, a consortium of more than 100 businesses, government bodies, and non-profits included polystyrene on the list of problematic and unnecessary packaging to be eliminated by 2025.³

For the sake of our communities, our ocean, and our climate, we must take immediate action to address plastic pollution. Together, these bills will set Oregon on the path to truly addressing the plastic pollution crisis. That is why we strongly urge your support of SB 543, SB 544, and SB 545.

Sincerely,



Anja Brandon, Ph.D.
Associate Director, U.S. Plastics Policy
Ocean Conservancy

² Ocean Conservancy, [California Senate Bill 54: A Win for Our Ocean](#).

³ Ocean Conservancy, [The U.S. Plastics Pact List of Problematic Items to be Eliminated](#)