



February 14, 2023

Senate Committee on Energy and Environment
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support for Plastic Reduction Bills - SB 543, SB 544 and SB 545

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

Metro and the Oregon Zoo support plastics reduction.

Metro is the regional government of the Portland metropolitan area, with major responsibility for managing the region's solid waste and providing opportunities for recycling and waste reduction. We serve a population of almost 1.7 million, providing services and educational resources that protect the environment and reduce the amount and toxicity of the solid waste stream. Metro is also the governing body of the Oregon Zoo, which values wildlife and environmental conservation.

The rapid rise of plastic production has created a global plastic waste crisis. Plastic pollution is a growing threat to the health of marine and land-based wildlife, ecosystems and humans. A reduction in plastic production will only be achievable through the combined efforts of consumers, businesses and governments. The plastic reduction bills before you today, will make great strides in our region and the state.

- **Polystyrene Phase Out.** SB 543 would prohibit food vendors from using polystyrene foam containers or providing single-use foodware containers unless they meet after January 1, 2025 and also prohibit the sale or distribution of polystyrene foam containers, polystyrene foam packaging peanuts, or foodware containers containing perfluoroalkyl or polyfluoroalkyl substances after January 1, 2025. In the Metro region, both the City of Portland and the City of Milwaukie have ban polystyrene to-go containers. We are excited to see an individual city policy expanded across the region, but more importantly the state.
- **25% Reduction in Single-Use Plastic Packaging and Foodware.** SB 544 would direct the Environmental Quality Commission to establish a program for source reduction of single-use plastic food ware and single-use packaging and achieve 25 percent source reductions compared to 2023 levels by 2030.
- **Reusable Containers in Grocery Stores and Restaurants.** SB 545 would amend the health code to allow consumers to use their own containers for refilling with food at food establishment

From a solid waste management perspective, Metro supports waste prevention and reduction. We know that reducing waste upstream by modifying people's behavior is more beneficial to the environment than disposal even if it is recycling. Oregon has one of the highest rates of recycling in the country, but polystyrene is hard to recycle as it is often contaminated with food and not eligible for curbside recycling so it ends up in a landfill. In 2018, more than 10,000 tons of Oregon's recycling was dumped into landfills, in part due to contamination from non-recyclable plastics.

Things like polystyrene and other single use plastics tend to break down into smaller and smaller pieces and contribute to litter.

From a conservation perspective, the environmental impacts of plastic pollution are substantial. The Oregon Zoo believes that reducing the sources of plastic pollution will protect the health of wildlife, people and the ecosystems we depend on. Plastic poses a threat to the majority of sea turtle, marine mammal, and seabird species, whether by ingestion or entanglement. Plastic microtrash threatens California condors, which the Zoo is working really hard to rehabilitate back from near extinction. Microtrash can prevent chicks from digesting food, resulting in starvation and death. A growing body of research shows how microplastics and associated toxins can travel through the ocean food web, ending up in seafood for human consumption.

Reducing single-use plastics and banning polystyrene will yield less waste and contaminated recyclables for the waste streams while protecting fish, wildlife and the environment. Allowing consumers to use their own reusables in food establishments will give Oregonians more tools in their control to reduce their impact on the waste streams and the environment.

We urge your support on SB 543, SB 544, and SB 545.

Sincerely,

Jenna Jones
State and Regional Affairs Advisor
Metro