



**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Energy & Environment  
on Senate Bill 544**

**February 14, 2023**

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Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance innovative, collaborative and equitable solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

Dear Chair Sollman, Vice-Chair Findley, and Committee Members–

On behalf of the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC), a nonpartisan, environmental nonprofit that works at the nexus of human health and the environment, we would like to express our support for SB 544, which requires a 25% reduction of single-use plastic ware and single-use packaging by 2030 as well as limit the use of packaging unnecessary for the delivery of a product or food item.

**Climate and Health Impacts of Plastic Throughout its Life Cycle:**

Plastic has harmful impacts on our climate, environment and human health in every stage of its life cycle. During the production, oil feedstock is combined with chemical additives such as formaldehyde, heavy metals, PFAS, and other harmful chemicals.<sup>1</sup> Oil refineries expose local residents and workers to hundreds of chemicals including ammonia, methane, sulfuric acid, and hydrogen chloride.<sup>2</sup> Exposure to these chemicals is shown to increase rates of cancer, respiratory illness, reproductive harm, and birth defects.<sup>3 4</sup>

Plastic use is found in nearly all aspects of our lives, such as our clothing, our kids' toys, and in our utensils and food packaging. Exposure to plastic in our food packaging and

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ciel.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Plastic-and-Health-The-Hidden-Costs-of-a-Plastic-Planet-February-2019.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://oehha.ca.gov/media/downloads/faqs/refinerychemicalsreport032019.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7691047/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://pha.berkeley.edu/2021/04/11/refinery-pollutants-and-their-effect-on-public-health/>



water bottles causes chemicals to be released into our food such as PVC and polyethylene.<sup>5</sup> Exposure or ingestion of these chemicals can cause endocrine disruption and immune dysfunction, birth defects and infertility, as well as liver dysfunction.<sup>6 7</sup> Even for folks like me that try to avoid plastic, it's unavoidable. It comes with your takeout and your grocery packaging.

And recycling one-time use plastic is not enough. Only 9% of all plastic ever made has been recycled, with 12% being burned and 79% of it ending up in landfills and the environment. When it ends up in the ocean, microplastics can actually intervene with the ocean's ability to absorb carbon.<sup>8</sup> And when it is burned, incineration of plastic packaging will account for 84 million metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and 309 million metric tons by 2050.<sup>9</sup> Without immediate change, the plastic waste we generate is expected to double in the next five years.

SB 544 tries to address this problem. We urge the Senate Committee On Energy and Environment to support this bill.

Sincerely,

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<sup>5</sup> <https://ecologycenter.org/factsheets/adverse-health-effects-of-plastics/>

<sup>6</sup>

[https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/programs/population\\_and\\_sustainability/pdfs/environmental\\_reproductive\\_health\\_report.pdf](https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/programs/population_and_sustainability/pdfs/environmental_reproductive_health_report.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <https://ecologycenter.org/factsheets/adverse-health-effects-of-plastics/>

<sup>8</sup>

<https://www.ciel.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Plastic-and-Health-The-Hidden-Costs-of-a-Plastic-Planet-February-2019.pdf> at p. 3.

<sup>9</sup>

<https://www.ciel.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Plastic-and-Health-The-Hidden-Costs-of-a-Plastic-Planet-February-2019.pdf>.