

April 12, 2023

Representative Pam Marsh, Chair
House Committee on Climate, Energy and Environment
900 Court St. NE, H-474
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support Senate Bill 543, Polystyrene Foodware

Dear Chair Marsh and Members of the Climate, Energy and Environment Committee:

Oceana strongly supports Senate Bills 543 aimed at tackling plastic pollution at the source by prohibiting single-use polystyrene foam foodware, coolers and packing peanuts. Oceana is an international nonprofit dedicated solely to protecting and restoring the world's oceans. Oceans cover 71 percent of the globe and provide over 50 percent of the Earth's oxygen. Our oceans are home to most of the life on our planet and play a central role in the world's natural systems, like regulating our climate and absorbing carbon dioxide. Despite the oceans' importance to life on Earth, they are choking on plastics.

The focus of this bill, polystyrene foam, is a particularly egregious type of plastic manufactured from petroleum-based chemicals and other synthetic additives. Expanded or foamed polystyrene does not readily biodegrade, rather it breaks up into smaller and smaller pieces that are increasingly difficult to clean up. It suffers from a fundamental design problem in that it is often only used once, yet it can persist in the environment for centuries, regardless of recycled content.

Plastic pollution is an increasingly ubiquitous dilemma. An astounding [33 billion pounds](#) of plastic washes into the marine environment every year from land and sea-based sources. We now know microplastics are found to permeate [all ocean depths](#). And over 900 marine species, including many endangered species, are affected by marine plastic pollution primarily through entanglement and ingestion. Even zooplankton, tiny marine organisms that form the base of the ocean food chain, are eating plastic, which can then be transferred to larger ocean predators like fish and crab.

Oregon is not immune to these impacts. Plastics have been found in Pacific oysters and rockfish off our coast. And plastic pollution is not exclusively a coastal problem. In 2021, Environment Oregon did a [survey](#) of 30 waterways and found microfibers and/or microplastic particles in every single waterway they sampled-- from the Willamette, Rogue and Deschutes rivers to Wallowa Lake, Crater Lake, and everywhere in between.

Half of all plastic in Earth's history was produced in [the last 19 years](#). We are now seeing plastic in our [air](#), [water](#), [food](#) and [bodies](#) — and most of it did not exist before 2004. As of 2015, the world is

producing more than 400 million tons of plastic every year. And plastic production is not slowing down. In fact, it is growing faster than ever. The plastics industry expects [annual production](#) will more than [triple](#) by 2050. Almost all plastics are made from fossil fuels that contribute to climate change from extraction to production to their end of life. If plastic were a country, it would be the [fifth-largest emitter](#) of greenhouse gases in the world. In the U.S., plastic is projected to [outpace](#) coal's greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. We simply cannot meet our climate goals if we continue using plastics in this way.

Oregon took an important step toward improving our recycling system under the Recycling Modernization Act. But even a robust recycling system cannot keep pace with the ballooning production of plastics or those problematic plastics that are hard to recycle and nearly impossible to clean up. Reduction must be part of the solution. Ultimately, this bill will help Oregon eliminate some of the most egregious plastics made of polystyrene foam with significant benefits to our rivers, estuaries and ocean.

For these reasons, we encourage you to vote yes on SB 543.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Enticknap', written over a light blue rectangular background.

Ben Enticknap
Pacific Campaign Manager and Senior Scientist