

April 16, 2025

The Honorable John Lively
House Committee on Climate, Energy and Environment
900 Court Street, NE H-481
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: SB 551 A —plastic bags—Support

Dear Chair Lively, Vice Chair Levy, Vice Chair Gamba, and members of the House Committee on Climate, Energy and Environment:

On behalf of our 18,417 members and supporters in Oregon, Oceana strongly supports Senate Bill 551, the "Beyond the Bag Ban." This bill will reduce pollution by 1) eliminating all plastic checkout bags at restaurants and retail establishments in the state, 2) phasing out single-use plastic hotel toiletries, and 3) allowing plastic utensils and condiments at food establishments only upon request.

Oceana is an international organization dedicated to protecting and restoring the world's oceans. The oceans face a massive and growing threat from plastic pollution. An astounding 33 billion pounds of plastic wash into the marine environment every year from land and sea-based sources.¹ Plastic pollution is an increasingly ubiquitous dilemma. Everywhere we look, we find plastic, from the deepest ocean trenches to the highest mountains.

As plastic continues to flood into our oceans, the list of marine species affected by plastic pollution grows. Tens of thousands of individual animals have been observed suffering from entanglement or ingestion of plastic permeating the marine environment – it is impacting everything from zooplankton, clams and fish to marine mammals and seabirds.² These impacts are both global and

¹ Forrest A, Giacobazzi L, et al (2019) Eliminating Plastic Pollution: How a Voluntary Contribution From Industry Will Drive the Circular Plastics Economy. Front. Mar. Sci. 6:627. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2019.00627

² E.g. Warner et al. (2020) Choked, Strangled, Drowned: The Plastics Crisis Unfolding in Our Oceans.

Oceana. Available:

https://usa.oceana.org/sites/default/files/2020/11/25/report_single_pagesdoi_choked_strangled_drowned_final.pdf

SB 551 A, Beyond the Bag Ban
Support
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local, including in marine life off the Oregon coast. Researchers have found microplastics in oysters, razor clams,³ pink shrimp, rockfish,⁴ gray whales,⁵ and other marine life offshore Oregon.

Increasing plastic production is also at odds with lowering greenhouse gas emissions. A vast majority of plastic comes from fossil fuels and contributes to climate change at every stage of its life cycle. Here in the U.S., plastic is projected to outpace coal's greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.⁶

Oregonians overwhelmingly support state policies that reduce single-use plastics. In March 2023 Oceana released a statewide poll finding that 88% of Oregon voters support local and state policies that reduce single-use plastics.⁷ Overall, 92% of Oregon voters say they are concerned about the impacts of plastic pollution and 89% support requiring companies to reduce single-use plastic packaging and foodware.⁸ These findings holds true nationally and across political parties. In February 2025, Oceana released the results of a national poll revealing that most Republican, Democrat, and Independent voters are concerned about the impacts of plastic pollution on our oceans and health, and support policies to reduce single-use plastic.⁹

For the above reasons, we support SB 551 and request you pass it out of Committee.

Sincerely,



Ben Enticknap
Pacific Campaign Director & Senior Scientist

³ Baechler, BR (2019) Microplastic concentrations in two Oregon bivalve species: Spatial, temporal, and species variability. *Limnology and Oceanography Letters*. Available:

<https://aslopubs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/lol2.10124>;

⁴ Traylor, SD, et al. (2024) From the ocean to our kitchen table: anthropogenic particles in the edible tissue of U.S. West Coast seafood species. *Frontiers in Toxicology*. Available:

<https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/toxicology/articles/10.3389/ftox.2024.1469995/full>

⁵ Torres, LG, et al. (2023). Zoop to poop: assessment of microparticle loads in gray whale zooplankton prey and fecal matter reveal high daily consumption rates. Available:

<https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/marine-science/articles/10.3389/fmars.2023.1201078/full>;

⁶ Beyond Plastics (2021). The new coal: Plastic and Climate Change. Available:

<https://www.beyondplastics.org/plastics-and-climate>

⁷ <https://usa.oceana.org/88-of-oregon-voters-support-state-policies-that-reduce-single-use-plastic/>

⁸ Id.

⁹ Oceana Plastics Survey (February 2025). Available: <https://usa.oceana.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2025/02/Oceana-Plastic-Pollution-Perceptions-February-2025.pdf>