

For immediate release

March 6, 2020

Contact:

Rep. Jared Mead, Jared.Mead@leg.wa.gov (360) 786-7892 (or Guy Bergstrom (360) 786-7811)

Sen. Mona Das, Mona.Das@leg.wa.gov (360) 786-7692 (or Hannah M. Sabio Howell (630) 456-3332)

Heather Trim, Zero Waste Washington, heather@zerowastewashington.org (206) 351-2898

Nora Nickum, Seattle Aquarium, n.nickum@seattleaquarium.org (206) 556-1830

Brad Lovaas, Washington Refuse and Recycling Association, brad@wrra.org (360) 943-8859

Derek Ruckman, Recology druckman@recology.com (206) 601-6456

Bill requiring recycled content in plastic bottles passes second house in Washington

Law would be a significant step towards meeting the state's recycling and waste reduction goals

Olympia. On Thursday evening, the Senate passed, with bipartisan support (30-19-0) a bill requiring minimum post-consumer recycled content in beverage bottles, [ESHB 2722](#), in Washington. The bill had only minor changes from the House [version](#) that passed (64-32-2) on February 13, 2020. After passage into law, this bill will help create strong market pull to help stabilize the value of recycled plastic.

The required content in plastic beverage bottles would phase-in gradually at these levels:

January 2022 – 10% minimum content

January 2025 - 25% minimum content

January 2030 - 50% minimum content

“This type of legislation is critical because we need to jump-start a local market here in Washington state for recyclable material. One reason for that is China stopped accepting much of what we used to ship overseas to get recycled,” said Representative Jared Mead (D-Mill Creek), the bill’s prime sponsor in the House. “I’m passionate about this because, like all fathers and mothers, you can’t help but think about the world your son or daughter will inherit. And I want to leave Washington state better than I found it.”

The bill applies to 2 ounce to 1 gallon-sized plastic beverage containers for all beverages intended for human or animal consumption except infant formula. Refillable plastic beverage containers, rigid plastic containers or bottles for medical use and bladders or pouches that contain wine are exempt.

“I thank my senate colleagues for passing this important bill and look forward to the governor’s signature,” said Senator Mona Das (D-Kent), the lead sponsor of the companion bill in the Senate. “This bill will increase recycling of single-use plastics and help reduce the leakage into the environment.”

“Recycling requires demand by manufacturers. Making plastics with more recycled content will increase the demand for the materials we collect and sort everyday” said Brad Lovaas, Executive Director of the Washington Refuse and Recycling Association. “Requiring post-consumer recycled content is one of the most impactful policies that can increase demand.”

“In 2019, virgin plastic resin for beverage containers became less expensive relative to recycled resin, due to the glut of oil and gas in the US. This bill helps make the recycled resin more valuable,” said Heather Trim, Executive Director of Zero Waste Washington. “HB2722 also addresses climate change because making bottles out of recycled plastic uses about 75% less energy than creating virgin plastic bottles.”

“This is a critical step to ensure that plastics do not end up in our waterways and oceans by giving single-use plastics a second life,” said Nora Nickum, Ocean Policy Manager at the Seattle Aquarium.

Several major national beverage companies have already made significant commitments to minimum recycled content levels.

The beverage industry has been working collaboratively on developing the bill language in Washington.

Under the bill, the Washington State Department of Ecology would be authorized to grant temporary waivers and extensions based on factors such as availability of recycled resin and the capacity of recycling or processing infrastructure.

“I applaud Representative Mead, Senator Das and the legislature for implementing a bill that will improve domestic recycling, reduce the demand for fossil fuel derived plastic and reinforce Ecology’s new Recycling Development Center,” said Derek Ruckman, Recology’s Pacific Northwest Vice President & Group Manager. “As a Waste Zero company, we support policies that strengthen the Triple Bottom Line of the Recycling business model.”

Later this year, it is expected that California will take another go at legislation with similar required minimum content requirements.

For full bill history: <https://app.leg.wa.gov/billssummary?BillNumber=2722&Year=2019&Initiative=false>

####