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Bill to Tackle Plastics Crisis Passes Washington State House

Recycling and Plastics bill passes last major hurdle

Olympia, WA—Today the Washington State House voted 73-24 to pass [Senate Bill 5022](#), marking a significant step forward in tackling the [runaway plastics crisis in Washington](#). The bill bans expanded polystyrene peanuts, coolers and foodware; requires businesses to provide single-use utensils, cups, lids and other foodware only upon customer request; and ensures that plastic beverage bottles, household cleaning and personal care bottles, plus trash bags, contain minimum levels of post-consumer recycled content.

SB 5022 passed the Senate in March and will head to Governor Inslee's desk for his signature after a concurrence vote at the Senate.

"Plastic and expanded polystyrene have become huge problems," said Senator Mona Das (D-Kent), "not only for the damage that plastic and foam waste does to our beautiful Washington landscape and wildlife, but also because they are a growing part of our state's solid waste management challenge. At this point – in 2021, in a state that has consistently been at the cutting edge of new technology and sustainable development – we should not be manufacturing material that isn't recyclable, reusable, or compostable. We have both the technology and the support of our communities to get this done. I was proud to introduce this bill to tackle the plastics crisis."

"Washington has been a national leader on addressing recycling and plastic pollution," said Representative Liz Berry (D-Seattle). "I hear from my constituents, and even my 5-year-old son who told me that garbage is the biggest threat to our oceans, that we must take urgent action. I am thrilled that the bill passed the House floor. This bill will reduce unnecessary plastic waste, ban

dangerous petrochemicals, and help us create a market for recycled plastic here in Washington that will reduce overall waste.”

Most plastic that goes into our oceans does not go away, instead breaking up into smaller pieces that can be impossible to clean up and are mistaken for food by marine life.

“Plastic pollution is one of the most pressing issues facing Washington’s rivers, oceans, and wildlife. Nothing we use for ten minutes should be allowed to pollute our environment for hundreds of years,” said Mandy Apa, Campaign Associate from Environment Washington. “This bill will make Washington a national leader in preventing plastic pollution.”

“Globally, 33 billion pounds of plastic waste enter our oceans each year,” said Sara Papanikolaou, Washington Field Representative for Oceana. “We have to start reducing the production and waste of single-use plastics unless we want to leave our children and grandchildren with a plastic ocean as our legacy.”

“Puget Sound is a national treasure, an economic driver for the state, and a culturally significant waterbody for our region - but lately we’ve been seeing more and more single-use plastic polluting the watershed.” said Alyssa Barton, Policy Manager from Puget Soundkeeper. “We’re glad that the Washington legislature has taken steps toward preventing major sources of marine debris from entering Puget Sound.”

“Plastic has been documented in marine habitats all over the planet, even in the deepest ocean trench, but plastic pollution is not a faraway problem. Seattle Aquarium water samples from Puget Sound come back with lots of microplastic particles,” said Nora Nickum, Ocean Policy Manager at the Seattle Aquarium. “We celebrate this legislation enabling action right here in our state to protect the ocean and fragile marine life.”

“Anyone who’s ever been at a beach clean-up knows how much plastic is already polluting our state, and how hard it is to clean it up,” said Gus Gates, Washington Policy Manager from the Surfrider Foundation. “We’re thrilled that the Washington legislature is taking strong action this year to reduce single-use plastics and we’re hopeful our beaches can start being less of a plastic dumping ground and restored to their natural beauty that is so important for countless Washingtonians.”

Plastic pollution also places a huge financial burden on local communities who often bear the costs to clean up plastic waste, and the vast majority of plastic waste is not recyclable nor recycled.

“Ideally we reduce our use of plastic in the first place by bringing our own bags and reusable water bottles,” said Heather Trim, Executive Director, Zero Waste Washington. “But for those items that we do end up recycling, this bill helps bring value to the recycling system by mandating minimum recycled content.”

Finally, plastics significantly contribute to climate change throughout their lifecycle and pose risks to public health.

“Plastics are a danger to public health, as toxic chemicals from plastic packaging can make their way into the food we eat,” said Giovanni Severino, Lead Policy Organizer, Latino Community Fund of Washington. “Plastics have already been found in our air, water, honey, and bodies and we need the sort of vision and leadership shown by Washington’s leaders today to head off this health crisis that is already underway.”

Plastics Free Washington Coalition/ Washington Sin Plástico members:

[Environment Washington](#)

Environment Washington is a statewide, citizen-based environmental advocacy organization working for a cleaner, greener, healthier future.

[Latino Community Fund of Washington](#)

The Latino Community Fund cultivates new leaders, supports cultural and community based non-profit organizations, and improves the quality of life for all Washingtonians.

[Oceana](#)

Oceana is the largest international advocacy organization dedicated solely to ocean conservation. Oceana is rebuilding abundant and biodiverse oceans by winning science-based policies in countries that control one third of the world's wild fish catch.

[Puget Soundkeeper](#)

Puget Soundkeeper's mission is to protect and enhance the waters of Puget Sound for the health and restoration of our aquatic ecosystems and the communities that depend on them.

[Seattle Aquarium](#)

Our mission: Inspiring Conservation of Our Marine Environment.

[Surfrider Foundation](#)

The Surfrider Foundation is dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of the world's ocean, waves and beaches, for all people, through a powerful activist network.

[Zero Waste Washington](#)

Zero Waste Washington drives policy change for a healthy and waste-free world.