

May 29, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leaders McConnell, Schumer and McCarthy:

As a diverse coalition of public health advocates, environmentalists, frontline community members, and recyclers, we write to you with recommendations for building a future with less plastic pollution and healthier communities, while also protecting local recycling programs and waste workers.

The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged many things, including our ability to effectively reduce waste, support local jobs and infrastructure, and keep our communities healthy. At the same time, the plastic life cycle from production to disposal continues to threaten our environment and expose us to growing health risks, including those shown to increase the severity of coronavirus infections.

We continue to throw away millions of pounds of plastic stuff every day, where it piles up in landfills, communities, and natural spaces across our planet. Meanwhile, local recycling and bottle deposit programs across the country face collapsed markets, labor shortages, and dangerous working conditions. Many programs have already been suspended while others teeter on the brink of collapse.

Nobody wins when we lose local recycling programs, but short-term Federal funding must be designed to support existing programs and community resiliency, not the demands of corporate plastic producers. Because we support local solutions and waste reduction, we oppose proposals such as the RECOVER Act ([H.R.5115](#)) as written that would allow plastic industry-affiliated groups to receive their own indirect bailout. Such funds could be used to promote dangerous, unproven, and thrifless technologies that would encourage *more* single-use plastic production at taxpayers' expense.

The profits of these groups, namely plastic producers and consumer goods manufacturers, dwarf any infrastructure stimulus proposals including the RECOVER Act. They should be held financially responsible before burdening taxpayers, especially in this time of extraordinary need.

We strongly recommend that Congress instead pass the Break Free From Plastic Pollution Act ([S.3263/H.R.5845](#)). This legislation would reduce waste and help local recyclers in the

long-term by making producers financially responsible for their discarded products and expanding container deposit laws to fund our programs, while encouraging manufacturers to design more reusable packaging and safer products.

We further recommend that reduction efforts be coupled with minimum recycled content requirements. Many producers have failed to incorporate recycled content into new products even when materials are plentiful, impairing the very programs they purport to support. We need these requirements to incentivize manufacturers to “close the loop,” and reduce the production of virgin material.

The production of new plastic is also responsible for the discharge or runoff of billions of plastic pellets and other pre-consumer materials into waterways and communities surrounding facilities. Any long-term waste management plan to address plastic pollution should also include a temporary moratorium on new plastic facilities, along with updated regulations to require “zero discharge.” Facilities such as the Formosa Plastics Corporation plant in Point Comfort, TX have already been required to do so.

Our communities’ recycling programs need immediate support to sustain programs that protect our environment and supply recycled materials. With that said, we hope you understand that short term relief need not betray an obligation to hold polluters responsible and prioritize waste prevention and reduction in the long-term.

Thank you for your consideration,

350 Butte County
350 Conejo / San Fernando Valley
350 Humboldt
350 New Orleans
350 Silicon Valley
350 South Bay Los Angeles
7th Generation Advisors
Algalita Marine Research & Education
Beyond Plastics
Californians Against Waste
CalPIRG
CoPIRG
CARE for the Cape & Islands
Center for Biological Diversity
Center for Coalfield Justice
Center for International Environmental Law
Clean Air Council
Clean Energy Now Texas

ConnPIRG Students
Conservation Law Foundation
Earthworks
Eco-Cycle
Ecology Center
Environment America
Environment California
Environment Colorado
Environment Connecticut
Environment Florida
Environment Georgia
Environment Iowa
Environment Maine
Environment Maryland
Environment Massachusetts
Environment Michigan
Environment Minnesota
Environment Missouri

Environment Montana
Environment Nevada
Environment New Jersey
Environment New Mexico
Environment North Carolina
Environment Ohio
Environment Oregon
Environment Texas
Environment Washington
Environment Wisconsin
Eureka Recyclers
MassPIRG
MassPIRG Students
Master Composters CC TX
NJPIRG STUDENTS
Nothing Left to Waste
Oceana
Ohio PIRG
OSPIRG
OSPIRG Students
Peak Plastic Foundation
Peal Plastic Foundation
PennEnvironment
PennPIRG
Plastic Free Curriculum
Plastic Pollution Coalition
San Antonio Bay Estuarine Waterkeeper
SanDiego350
Save Our Shores
Save RGV
Sierra Club
SoCal 350 Climate Action
Sunrise Movement
Sunrise Movement Chico
Sunrise Movement Dallas
Texas Campaign for the Environment
Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy
Services
TexPIRG
The 5 Gyres Institute
The Last Beach Cleanup
The Last Plastic Straw

Florida PIRG Students
FracTracker Alliance
FreshWater Accountability Project
GAIA
Greenpeace USA
Heirs To Our Oceans
Indivisible CA-33
Indivisible California Green Team
Inland Ocean Coalition
League of Conservation Voters
Maryland PIRG
The Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition
The Post-landfill Action Network
The Story of Stuff Project
The Surfrider Foundation
Turning the Tide
Turtle Island Restoration Network
U-Konserve
UMD MaryPIRG
UPSTREAM
U.S. Public Interest Research Group
WashPIRG
WisPIRG
Zero Waste Washington