



Wednesday, June 29, 2022

Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr.
Subcommittee Chairman Paul Tonko
Committee on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Pallone and Subcommittee Chairman Tonko:

U.S. PIRG and Environment America thank you for holding a hearing in the Subcommittee on Environment and Climate Change, "No Time to Waste: Solutions for America's Broken Recycling System." The Break Free From Plastic Pollution Act, H.R. 2238, presents a comprehensive and effective approach to solving our waste problems and should be enacted. We also wish to express our support for many provisions of H.R. 1512, the CLEAN Future Act, which would tackle climate change, improve bottle recycling and temporarily pause permitting of new and expanded plastic production and related facilities. Please find our statement on the CLEAN Future Act [here](#).

The U.S. produces an immense amount of waste—we generate over 12 percent of the planet's waste even though we make up just 4 percent of the population. That averages out to around seven pounds of material per American every single day.¹

The mantra has always been "reduce, reuse, recycle" in that order--but for too long, we have focused only on the last "r". That isn't working. A recent report found that only about 5% of plastic waste in the U.S. gets recycled.² To solve our waste problem, we need to move beyond single-use plastic, by getting rid of the most harmful waste, and stopping the use of things we truly don't need—things we use for five minutes that then pollute our environment for hundreds of years.

¹ Adrian Pforzheimer and Alex Truelove, "Trash in America: Moving from Destructive Consumption to a Zero-Waste System," *Frontier Group, U.S. Public Interest Research Group Education Fund, Environment America Research & Policy Center and Community Action Works*, September 2021, <https://uspirg.org/sites/pirg/files/Trash-in-America-2021.pdf>.

² Frank Kummer, "Only about 5% of plastic waste gets recycled in US, new report says," *Phys.org*, May 5, 2022, <https://phys.org/news/2022-05-plastic-recycled.html>.



That's why U.S. PIRG and Environment America strongly support H.R. 2238, the Break Free From Plastic Pollution Act. This bill assembles proven policies from around the country to tackle the plastic pollution crisis by reducing waste at the source. It bans the worst single-use plastics, holds producers accountable for the waste they create, and allows the effects of plastic production on the environment and public health to be better studied and understood. To fully address plastic pollution, it is critical that we not only clean up existing plastic pollution, but prevent it altogether, as this bill does.

Members of U.S. PIRG, Environment America, our state organizations and other groups in our network have sent 63,000 messages to their representatives urging passage of the Break Free From Plastic Pollution Action. Hundreds of thousands of Americans have also joined us in urging their states to adopt similar legislation, leading to new bans on single use plastics and producer responsibility legislation in a dozen states.³

We also would like to share with the Committee the following reports from our research partners Frontier Group, U.S. PIRG Education Fund and Environment America Research & Policy Center:

- **Trash in America: Moving from destructive consumption to a zero-waste system**
 - [2021 Edition](#)
 - [2018 Edition](#)
- [Break the Waste Cycle: Producer responsibility policies to move the U.S. toward zero waste](#) (2020)
- [The State of Recycling: A survey of recycling efforts in eight states](#) (2019)
- [Factsheet: Banning single-use plastics](#) (2020)

We thank the Committee for considering legislation to reduce waste.

Sincerely,

Matt Casale
Environment Campaigns Director, U.S. PIRG

Lisa Frank
Executive Director, Washington Legislative Office, Environment America

³ U.S. PIRG, "Beyond Plastic: States Moving Beyond Plastic," <https://uspirg.org/feature/usp/beyond-plastic>. Last accessed June 29, 2022.