

**Opening Remarks
Matt Seaholm, President & CEO
Plastics Industry Association**

**U.S. Senate Environment & Public Works Committee
Subcommittee on Chemical Safety, Waste Management, Environmental Justice,
and Regulatory Oversight
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Good morning, Chairman Merkley, Ranking Member Wicker, and esteemed members of the committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. My name is Matt Seaholm, and I am the President & CEO of the Plastics Industry Association. Founded in 1937, we represent the entire supply chain of the plastics industry, in which nearly one million Americans are employed. Our membership includes material suppliers, equipment manufacturers, processors, and recyclers.

Let me first say, we appreciate the commitment of this committee to pursue solutions that reduce waste. There's a saying in our industry: We love plastic. We hate plastic waste. The way we see it, any molecule of plastic material that leaves the economy is truly a waste. We need to collect, sort and ultimately reprocess more material. And that goes for all substrates, not just plastic.

But today's hearing is first about the impacts of plastic use, so I'd like to discuss a few of those. More importantly the variety of people impacted:

- A husband, hit head-on at 50 MPH, and even though they had to cut him out of the car with the jaws of life, he surprised even the medics on site as the deployment of airbags made from plastic fibers left him unharmed.
- A teenager who only has access to nutrition thanks to plastic packaging because he lives in a food desert in our nation's capital.
- A retiree with type-one diabetes since childhood who remains active because of the sterile, interchangeable plastics used to support decades of treatments through the loss of kidney function.
- A young family without running water for an entire week because a hurricane flooded their neighborhood along the gulf coast but were not thirsty because of plastic water bottles delivered to them in their time of need.
- A single mother who, during a crucial time of need during the baby formula shortage, was able to utilize pre-sterilized plastic milk collection bags to safely store breast milk for her baby.

The list can go on and on and before it's suggested these aren't the types of applications truly at the heart of the discussion, I would point to three proposed pieces of legislation in this Congress that call for the stoppage of production of the plastics used in each of these scenarios. If there's one thing a pandemic

and now a war on the European continent have taught us, stable supply chains are imperative. Producing plastic in America is a good thing and something that I believe should be embraced as essential, not abruptly stopped.

Plastic has become the preferred material in most applications because it uses the least number of resources to manufacture and transport as well as providing greater performance. However, we must also acknowledge that the incredible innovations in plastic materials and products have outpaced our ability to recycle them because infrastructure has not kept up.

Our nation's recycling rates are too low. That is why companies across our supply chain work tirelessly to improve recyclability and invest billions of dollars into the prevention of waste and the technologies to recycle. However, our industry does not control the entire value chain of recycling in America and that is why we need partners to help get these rates where we all want them.

We see Congress as a very important partner in this process and appreciate this hearing for the opportunity to talk about solutions to reduce plastic waste. Policy approaches I might suggest are:

- 1) Increase investments in critical recycling infrastructure to ensure that collection, sortation and processing can keep up with the complexities of all materials in the marketplace. The EPA has started their process for granting resources included in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act that stem from Save Our Seas 2.0 legislation passed in 2020. It's a great start, but certainly more is needed.
- 2) Promote end-market development for the variety of plastic resins to ensure demand remains for recycled materials. Reasonable and attainable recycled content requirements can help spur investment and guarantee markets for recyclable material.
- 3) Encourage innovations in recycling technologies to ensure materials that cannot economically be recovered through traditional methods can still be recycled, moving us toward a more circular economy. But perhaps more importantly, I urge Congress to avoid stifling innovation and promising new technologies that are needed.

There is already real value in post-consumer plastic. These policies will help us better capture it and keep it in our economy.

At the end of the day, plastic is essential. Plain and simple. We need it in our lives. But America does not recycle enough of it. Our industry wants to recycle more and that's why every day, we recycle more than we did the day before. Working together I know we can get these rates up. And "together" is the most important word in that sentence. I hope that is the spirit of today's discussion.

Thank you again for the opportunity to offer testimony on behalf of our industry and I look forward to answering your questions.