

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 20, 2022

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

We write to encourage your Administration to expand its current efforts on reducing plastic pollution and the harmful impacts that plastics have on our communities and our climate throughout their entire lifecycle. In light of the first meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC), which continues to work to develop an internationally legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, U.S. leadership in reducing environmental harm from plastics has never been more critical.

Plastic pollution can no longer be looked at as a stand-alone environmental issue. As plastic production globally has soared to over 360 million metric tons, plastic pollution has been found around the entire globe – from the deepest trenches in the ocean to within our bodies. Each year, nearly 11 million metric tons of plastic waste flow into the ocean from land-based sources alone. Without immediate action, that number is expected to triple by the year 2040¹. There is growing scientific evidence that microplastics, and the toxic chemicals they contain, are impacting human health to degrees not yet understood².

Fossil-fuel derived petrochemicals are at the root of impacts to environmental justice communities, the climate crisis, and the plastic pollution epidemic. The plastics sector is already responsible for more global greenhouse gas emissions than the entire aviation sector, and as the world transitions to clean and renewable energy, demand for oil is projected to shift to petrochemicals with plastics estimated to account for 20% of oil demand by 2050³. As plastic production continues to grow, so will associated greenhouse gas emissions, threatening to put our climate goals further out of reach.

This plastic pollution crisis also comes with decades of environmental injustices – driven by the siting of petrochemical and harmful waste management facilities in low-income communities and communities of color, exposing entire communities to harmful air and water with major human health consequences for surrounding communities, including increased incidences of asthma, cancers, endocrine disruption, developmental disorders, and heart disease. For decades, much of our plastic waste has been sent overseas where informal waste pickers collect, sort, and sell approximately 60% of all plastics collected for recycling globally⁴, and because of their work suffer hazardous working conditions including exposure to harmful air, water, and soil pollution. A global agreement to address plastic pollution should start at home, ensuring would-be sacrifice zones transition into communities who benefit from a clean, circular economy.

¹ [“Breaking the Plastic Wave: A Comprehensive Assessment of Pathways Towards Stopping Ocean Plastic Pollution.”](#) Pew Charitable Trusts. (2020)

² CIEL. [“Plastic & Health: The Hidden Cost of a Plastic Planet.”](#) (2019)

³ [“The New Plastics Economy.”](#) Ellen MacArthur Foundation. (2017)


⁴ Law, K.L., et al. [“The United States’ Contribution of Plastic Waste to Land and Ocean.”](#) *Science Advances*. (2020)

The U.S. is the top consumer of plastics and as a country we rank as high as third among countries contributing to coastal plastic pollution. As one of the leading drivers of this crisis, we have a responsibility to help move the world in the right direction. In light of the recent INC meetings, it is imperative that the United States work both at home and abroad to set high rules and standards to address the plastic production and waste crisis upstream at the source. We need to take leadership and urgent action, starting here at home, to protect our communities, our economy, and our climate from the continued threat from plastics.

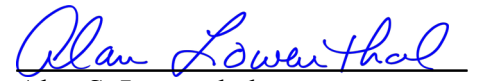
The Protecting Communities from Plastics Act and the Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act address this issue head on by requiring that we make less single-use plastics, protecting environmental justice communities by strengthening bedrock environmental laws, and investing in understanding the human health impacts of plastics. These types of actions show leadership and demonstrate that the U.S. is eager and supportive of policies that will meaningfully reduce plastic pollution.

The global legally binding instrument is an unprecedented opportunity to address our plastic pollution crisis and our climate crisis in tandem. We applaud your Administration's continued leadership on this issue and stand ready to support you in setting ambitious reduction targets for plastics at the domestic and international level. As the first INC concludes, the world will be looking to the U.S. to set a strong example through regulations and holding companies accountable for the waste they create. We urge you to set meaningful standards to address the global plastic pollution crisis at home and beyond.

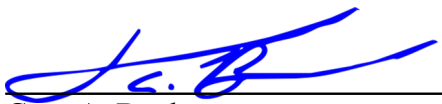
Sincerely,



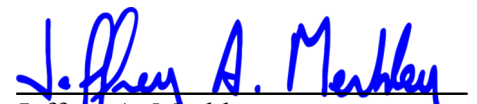
Jared Huffman
Member of Congress



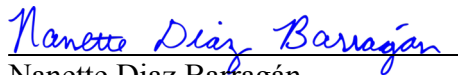
Alan S. Lowenthal
Member of Congress




Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

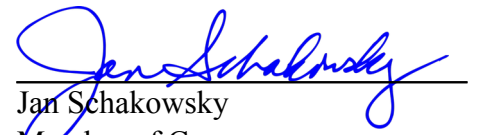


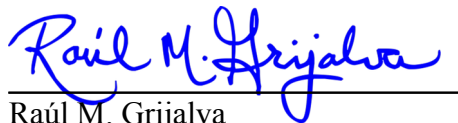
Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

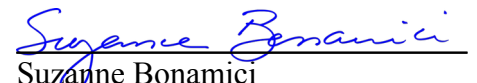

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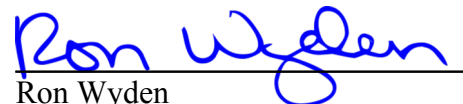
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