

April 3, 2013

Assembly Member Wesley Chesbro, Chair
Assembly Committee on Natural Resources
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

SUBJECT: AB 521 (Hueso and Stone) Marine plastic pollution producer responsibility - SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Chesbro:

On behalf of the San Francisco Commission on the Environment, we write to offer our strong support for Assembly Bill 521 (Hueso and Stone), which will require producers of plastic items to help stop plastic pollution from entering the marine environment.

San Francisco's Commission on the Environment sets policy for the City's Department of the Environment and advises the mayor and Board of Supervisors on environmental matters. San Francisco is a global leader in setting and rapidly progressing towards Zero Waste goals, and producer responsibility initiatives, such as the program established under AB 521 are an important part of this effort. With producer responsibility, companies are responsible for ensuring their products are recycled responsibly, and when health and environmental costs are included in the product price, there will be a strong incentive for producers to design - and consumers to purchase - goods that are more durable, easier to recycle, less toxic, and less likely to end up on our beaches and in our ocean.

Marine plastic pollution does substantial harm to California's environment and economy. Plastic litter pollutes our beaches, harms our wildlife, and costs taxpayers and local governments hundreds of millions of dollars each year in cleanup costs. Of the many types of litter that end up in the ocean, plastic products have some of the most serious impacts on marine life.¹ A 2012 study by the Convention on Biological Diversity found that 663 marine species have been impacted by marine litter through entanglement and ingestion—a two-thirds increase in species from a similar study in 1998. Marine plastic pollution also imposes substantial costs on taxpayers and local governments through cleanup efforts and lost tourism revenue. A 2012 report by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency found that California's coastal cities and counties spend approximately \$420 million each year to combat litter and curtail marine debris.²

AB 521 would build upon existing state and local measures to address the pervasive problem of marine plastic pollution in California. San Francisco and other local governments have taken action to prevent marine plastic pollution through bans and fees on some of the most problematic single-use items, such as plastic bags. The California Ocean Protection Council, the California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle), and the State Water Resources Control Board have identified marine plastic pollution as a priority environmental and economic issue and are taking substantial steps to address the problem.

¹ Ten Brink, P., I. Lutchman, S. Bassi, S. Speck, S. Sheavly, K. Register, and C. Woolaway. 2009. *Guidelines on the Use of Market-based Instruments to Address the Problem of Marine Litter*. Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP), Brussels, Belgium, and Sheavly Consultants, Virginia Beach, Virginia, USA.

² Stickel, B.H., A. Jahn, and W. Kier. 2012. *The Cost to West Coast Communities of Dealing with Trash, Reducing Marine Debris*. Prepared by Kier Associates for U.S. EPA, Region 9, Order for Services EPG12900098.

AB 521 would enhance, expand, and coordinate existing local and state marine plastic pollution prevention measures and provide urgently needed resources to achieve a more comprehensive solution. AB 521 would require producers of the most prevalent marine plastic pollution items to play a greater role in achieving a solution to the pollution problem. It will thereby save state and local governments and tax payers money while better protecting our state's valuable coastal and ocean resources.

Thank you for your leadership on this significant ocean and coastal health issue.

Sincerely,

CC:
Members, Assembly Committee on Natural Resources
Senator Ben Hueso
Assemblymember Mark Stone