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MOTION BY SUPERVISOR LINDSEY P. HORVATH

A Comprehensive Approach to Reducing Single Use Plastic in LA County

Plastic pollution has become one of the world’s most pressing environmental crises. Plastics - which are derived from petroleum and whose extraction accelerates climate change and pollutes vulnerable environmental justice communities - are found everywhere, from beaches and remote mountain tops to the internal organs of animals and even human blood and placenta. Microplastics, the small pieces of plastic debris that are ubiquitous in the natural environment, our food, and in our drinking water have become so prevalent that researchers estimate that the average person in the United States ingests up to a credit card’s worth of plastic each week. By 2050, projections estimate that the mass of plastic pollution in the ocean will exceed the mass of fish.

A 2020 study conducted by UCLA on behalf of LA County revealed significant adverse health, environmental, and economic impacts associated with plastic waste and serious market failures in our local recycling markets. In LA County, taxpayers spend over \$18 million annually to reduce debris and facilities process over 100 tons of waste each day. Coupled with the fact that historically, only about 10% of all plastic has ever been recycled, this situation is nothing short of a crisis.

The most efficient method of reducing plastic waste is through waste prevention, also known as source reduction or upstream solutions. In 2022, the Governor signed SB 54, the Plastic Pollution Prevention and Packaging Producer Responsibility Act, which goes further than any other state law to phase out several forms of single-use plastic by 2032 and holds plastic producers responsible for costs of managing its reuse or disposal. This landmark law imposes minimum content requirements for single-use packaging and plastic food service ware through

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extended producer responsibility (EPR) programs.

The LA County Board of Supervisors has taken several actions to address waste prevention of single-use plastics. County regulations include restrictions on single-use carryout bags, single-use plastic straws and stirrers, single-use foodware accessories, expanded polystyrene, plastic foodware, reuse for dine-in mandates, and a policy requiring zero-waste County events. Most of these policies were passed in a coordinated fashion with the City of Los Angeles and with a broad coalition of non-profit, community, and environmental justice organizations that are part of the Reusable LA coalition. In 2022, the Board adopted the Zero Waste Plan that provides a general framework with initiatives to reduce the amount of waste going to landfills and emphasizing the importance of preventing or eliminating waste altogether. The plan includes a zero-waste policy for County facilities and events. However, with nearly 4,500 County facilities, progress and implementation is difficult. For example, the Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration still has extremely limited infrastructure for recycling, and none for composting, despite it being a requirement under state law - hardly leadership by example. A December 2023 Public Works and Department of Beaches and Harbors report, "Protecting Santa Monica Bay and LA County Beaches from Trash and Pollution," identified developing new upstream regulations and effectively implementing existing regulations to reduce single-use plastics as the most promising strategies to further reduce waste and trash accumulation in our waterways and on our beaches.

In the coming weeks, the City of Los Angeles will finalize a Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) on a Comprehensive Plastics Reduction Program. The purpose of the program is to create a comprehensive, citywide strategy to reduce plastic waste and reduce the environmental and health impacts of single-use plastics more holistically than by individually regulating single products. The program evaluates numerous upstream measures that focus on reducing or eliminating the production and use of single-use products through actions such as restricting single-use plastic water bottles, mandating reusable foodware, and requiring microplastic filtration systems in washing machines. It also evaluates downstream measures that

involve managing the collection, reuse, recycling, and composting of reusable and disposable products.

The goal of the PEIR is to thoroughly analyze the environmental impacts of the program, evaluate and compare alternative regulatory approaches, and identify the environmentally superior strategies for managing or eliminating single-use plastics. The analysis discusses alternatives to single-use plastics including use of reusable products that, in addition to being environmentally preferable, are cost-saving over time. The draft PEIR results reveal that the upstream measures such as regulations on plastic bottles, foodware, textiles, and per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) would yield significant beneficial impacts by enhancing the natural environment and reducing litter and hazardous materials. The comprehensive scope of the PEIR offers several additional measures and policies that the County could adopt and moving in a coordinated fashion with the City of Los Angeles and would build on a legacy of partnership in waste reduction that benefits businesses, consumers, and the natural environment.

Our neighborhoods, beaches, natural areas, and waterways are drowning in plastic, with significant impacts to inland and coastal communities alike. While the 2045 Climate Action Plan and *OurCounty* Plan outline several short-term goals for reducing waste and eliminating single-use plastics, the gravity of this crisis calls for action now to safeguard the environment, protect public health, and advance environmental justice.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Chief Sustainability Office, with the assistance of LA County Public Works and County Counsel to report back within 90 days on the following directives:

1. Review the City of Los Angeles's Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) for the Comprehensive Plastics Reduction Program and present recommendations to the Board on the applicability to the County of the PEIR and on recommendations for further regulatory actions to reduce single-use plastic waste in Los Angeles County.
2. Report on the County's Zero Waste Plan, status of implementation, and a strategy to

require that all County Departments implement Zero Waste Plan principles at County facilities.

3. Report on the implementation of the County's Zero Waste Events Policy for County events and facilities and provide recommendations on improvements, and how the Policy may be expanded to require compliance from third party events held at County facilities.
4. Report on the County Single Use Plastic Food Service Ware Ordinance, status of implementation, estimated effectiveness, and any recommended implementation improvements.

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