

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



BRUCE S. ANDERSON, Ph.D.
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
P. O. BOX 3378
HONOLULU, HI 96801-3378

In reply, please refer to:
File

November 14, 2019

Aloha to the Members of the Plastic Source Reduction Working Group.

Welcome to the Plastic Source Reduction Working Group. Please accept my apologies for not being at this meeting to greet you personally.

The Department of Health appreciates each of you taking the time to participate in this working group. Plastic waste in the environment, and its impacts on human and environmental health, is a complex issue that is without easy solutions. There's much at stake for the environment, for business, and potentially for long term human health.

We wish you well in your efforts to craft recommendations that will help the legislature address this issue. In addition, your work with this workgroup will be supported by the staff of the Solid and Hazardous Waste Branch, your facilitators, and me in every way possible. We look forward to seeing the results of your work.

Sincerely,

BRUCE S. ANDERSON, Ph.D.
Director of Health

SENATOR MIKE GABBARD

20TH DISTRICT

KAPOLEI, MAKAKILO,
AND PORTIONS OF EWA, KALAELOA
& WAIPAHU



The Senate

STATE CAPITOL
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

CHAIRMAN
AGRICULTURE & ENVIRONMENT

MEMBER
JUDICIARY

MEMBER
LABOR, CULTURE, & THE ARTS

November 14, 2019

To the Members of the Plastic Source Reduction Working Group,

Aloha. As the introducer of SB 522 (Act 254) and Chair of the Agriculture and Environment Committee, I welcome you to the first meeting of the Plastic Source Reduction Working Group. I'm sorry I can't be there with you in person.

I commend you for your willingness to spend your time and energy to come up with recommendations on how to address the negative impacts that disposable plastics are having on our environment and human health. I also extend a big mahalo to the Department of Health for convening this Working Group and to Dr. Peter Adler for moderating.

As you convene today, it's important to recognize the past leadership of our County Councils on the plastic issue. It's also relevant to consider that the Honolulu City Council is now deliberating on Bill 40, which would have far reaching positive impacts in helping the people of Hawai'i take leadership on reducing disposable plastics.

I'm hopeful that you can find consensus and provide the State Legislature with solid recommendations leading into the 2021 session. Please let me know if I can ever be of assistance in this important task.

Me ke aloha pumehana,

Handwritten signature of Mike Gabbard.

Mike Gabbard
Senator, 20th District

MG/rr
LR-0838

Remarks from Rep. Lowen for the Plastics Source Reduction Working Group

Aloha and thank you for being present for the first meeting of the Plastic Source Reduction working group, and for agreeing to work on this very important and challenging issue. The problem of plastic pollution is one that has long been present but that has grown exponentially in visibility in recent years. Every day we see a new article about plastic pollution in the ocean, littering our beaches, about its impact on our environment and economy, about the presence of microplastics in the air we breathe, the food we eat, and the water we drink, and about the health impacts to human health and wildlife, including many endangered species.

It's clear that something has to change and that we cannot continue to act as if the waste we produce as manufacturers, retailers and consumers simply disappears when it leaves our hands. We also cannot continue to pretend that burning, landfilling, or shipping our waste to other countries solves these problems.

As your work progresses, I urge everyone to keep in mind our shared goal of preserving Hawaii's natural environment, which we depend upon to sustain our economy and our way of life. Hawaii has long been a leader in taking bold steps and setting an example that other states and countries can follow. I hope that the members of this group embrace this opportunity to lead. It is often said that Hawaii, as an Island state, is more attuned to practicing sustainability, but in the area of solid waste management this is clearly not the case. I hope that the work that comes out of this group will be a step towards changing that.

To the members of the group who have opposed legislation in the past to reduce restaurant waste, plastic bags, Styrofoam, single-use food service containers, etc., I hope that you will view this as an opportunity to craft reasonable legislation that can be applied consistently statewide, instead of the piecemeal county-by-county laws that will inevitably follow if the state fails to take action. In my view, these changes are coming either way, and this is the opportunity to be a part of shaping how they are implemented.

As the work on this moves forward, I also urge the group to be mindful of global impacts, climate change, and carbon emissions. Simply exporting our waste problems somewhere else is not a real solution. Similarly, saying that the plastics that come from elsewhere but end up in Hawaii are not our problem does not make us good global citizens.

Finally, I want to finish by saying that I believe that solving this problem is absolutely achievable and will be a win-win for all. We survived without plastic for all but the last 80 or so years of human existence, and I'm positive that we can find a way to reduce the amount that we use now with zero negative impacts.

Again, mahalo for your willingness to work on this, and I look forward to hearing the results.

Rep. Nicole Lowen