

JAN 22 2021

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE ENVIRONMENT.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that Hawaii's coastal
2 waters, famous worldwide for their clarity and stunning
3 wildlife, are endangered by an emerging threat. Plastic
4 pollution, particularly tiny pieces of plastic called
5 "microplastics", are contaminating Hawaii's waters, damaging
6 vulnerable marine ecosystems, and threatening human health.

7 Plastic pollution poses significant threats to marine
8 organisms and coastal communities. Most marine debris,
9 including plastic, originate from land-based sources like urban
10 runoff, inadequate waste disposal and management, and industrial
11 activity. Trillions of pieces of plastic float in the global
12 ocean, and billions more are found on beaches around the world.
13 Under a business-as-usual scenario, the oceans are expected to
14 contain more plastics by weight than fish by 2050.

15 The legislature further finds that plastic never fully
16 biodegrades or decomposes, but instead breaks into smaller
17 pieces that is readily dispersed by water and wind.



1 Microplastics, or plastic particles that are less than five
2 millimeters in size, are especially a threat to marine wildlife
3 and water quality. These plastic particles provide a pathway
4 into the marine food web for environmental pollutants dissolved
5 in seawater. Numerous studies have recorded the presence of
6 microplastics in Hawaiian waters. Larger plastic items can also
7 kill or harm animals by entangling them or causing intestinal
8 blockage.

9 The legislature recognizes that microplastics harm wildlife
10 via ingestion and subsequent exposure to dangerous toxins, which
11 are then transferred throughout the food web. Whenever an
12 animal adsorbs, ingests, or otherwise uptakes plastic, it can
13 choke on the plastic or have organ blockage or damage. The
14 animal is also exposed to an assortment of toxic contaminants
15 that affect its reproduction and survival. These toxic
16 chemicals occur from the breakdown of the plastic itself and
17 from the chemicals that the plastic has accumulated from
18 surrounding seawater. These toxic chemicals include heavy
19 metals and persistent organic pollutants like
20 dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane and polychlorinated biphenyl.



1 Scientists have documented over 2,200 species of plankton,
2 invertebrates, fish, sea birds, sea turtles, and marine mammals
3 negatively impacted by marine debris. Over forty per cent of
4 all seabirds eat plastic, sometimes with fatal effects. All
5 seven species of sea turtles that inhabit Hawaii's waters and
6 beaches have been shown to have ingested plastic particles.
7 Studies also show that a high percentage of the fish captured by
8 the Hawaii longline fishery methods have ingested microplastics.

9 The legislature further recognizes that plastic also poses
10 a threat to the fishing industry and people who eat seafood. As
11 fish and other aquatic life consume plastics and the toxins
12 within them, these chemicals can pose a serious health risk to
13 humans. Robust medical evidence links various contaminants
14 commonly found in microplastics with a host of human illnesses
15 including cancer, neurological disorders, and reproductive
16 disorders. The health risk to humans also poses an economic
17 risk to the fishing industry, whose vitality depends on healthy
18 ecosystems and consumer demand.

19 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to include plastic
20 within the definition of "water pollutant" in Hawaii's statutes
21 on water pollution.



1 SECTION 2. Section 342D-1, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
2 amended by amending the definition of "water pollutant" to read
3 as follows:

4 "Water pollutant" means dredged spoil, solid refuse,
5 incinerator residue, sewage, garbage, plastic, sewage sludge,
6 munitions, chemical waste, biological materials, radioactive
7 materials, heat, wrecked or discarded equipment, rock, sand,
8 soil, sediment, cellar dirt and industrial, municipal, and
9 agricultural waste."

10 SECTION 3. New statutory material is underscored.

11 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

12

INTRODUCED BY:





S.B. NO. 582

Report Title:

Water Pollutant; Definition; Plastic

Description:

Amends the definition of "water pollutant" as used in chapter 342D, HRS, relating to water pollution, to include plastic.

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