

MAR 16 2026

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH TO CONDUCT A STUDY ON
RECYCLABLE, BIODEGRADABLE, AND COMPOSTABLE LABELING IN THE
STATE TO DETERMINE IF THE LABELING IS ACCURATE AND NON-
DECEPTIVE.

1 WHEREAS, there is no national legislation or standard for
2 recyclable, biodegradable, and compostable product labeling; and
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4 WHEREAS, consumers rely on product labeling, including
5 symbols such as the "chasing arrows" triangle and biodegradable
6 and compostable claims, to make informed decisions about
7 recycling and composting; and
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9 WHEREAS, the chasing arrows symbol and biodegradable and
10 compostable product labeling have long been a source of
11 confusion for consumers; and
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13 WHEREAS, the chasing arrows symbol indicates the type of
14 plastic resin used in a product and does not guarantee
15 recyclability; and
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17 WHEREAS, recycling programs see high rates of contamination
18 when items that are generally recyclable are mixed in with items
19 that cannot be recycled; and
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21 WHEREAS, sorting through contaminated items is costly, and
22 often leads to most items being sent to landfills, including
23 materials that could have been recycled if they had been
24 properly sorted; and
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26 WHEREAS, approximately ninety-eight percent of virgin
27 plastics are made from fossil fuels; and
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1 WHEREAS, as renewable energy demand increases across the
2 country, fossil fuel companies are seeking to recoup lost
3 profits by increasing plastics production; and

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5 WHEREAS, in 2019, plastics generated 3.4 percent of global
6 greenhouse gas emissions, and these emissions are projected to
7 increase significantly as plastics production expands, with the
8 plastics industry expected to surpass coal-fired power plants as
9 a major leading source of greenhouse gas emissions; and

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11 WHEREAS, addressing climate change requires reducing
12 greenhouse gas emissions, including by decreasing the production
13 of virgin plastics and increasing plastic recycling rates; and

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15 WHEREAS, most packaging or products labeled as
16 biodegradable or compostable are designed to break down in
17 industrial composting facilities and will not break down under
18 home composting conditions; and

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20 WHEREAS, access to industrial composting facilities is
21 limited, and, even where such facilities exist, food and yard
22 waste are often prioritized over biodegradable and compostable
23 packaging and products due to contamination risks and capacity
24 constraints; and

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26 WHEREAS, as a result, biodegradable and compostable
27 packaging and products often end up in landfills, which are not
28 conducive to biodegrading or composting, leading to these
29 materials either persisting or breaking down anaerobically,
30 which can produce greenhouse gas emissions; now, therefore,

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32 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-third
33 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2026, the
34 House of Representatives concurring, that the Department of
35 Health is requested to conduct a study on recyclable,
36 biodegradable, and compostable labeling in the State to
37 determine if the labeling is accurate and non-deceptive; and

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39 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the study includes:

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41 (1) An assessment of products sold or distributed in
42 Hawaii that have the chasing arrows symbol, including



1 an evaluation of the types of such products that are
2 or are not actually recyclable in the State;
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4 (2) An assessment of products sold or distributed in
5 Hawaii that are labeled as biodegradable, including an
6 evaluation of the types of such products that are or
7 are not actually biodegradable in the State;
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9 (3) An assessment of products sold or distributed in
10 Hawaii that are labeled as compostable, including an
11 evaluation of the types of such products that are or
12 are not actually compostable in the State;
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14 (4) An examination of the distinction between home
15 compostable and industrial compostable products, and
16 whether such products meet recognized industry
17 standards, such as ASTM International standards for
18 compostability;
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20 (5) An analysis of the gaps between consumer expectations,
21 product labeling practices, and actual recycling and
22 composting capabilities and outcomes in the State;
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24 (6) An analysis of common contaminants that may be
25 introduced into the recycling stream, composting
26 facilities, or the environment due to misleading or
27 unclear recyclable, biodegradable, and compostable
28 labeling;
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30 (7) A review of existing standards, definitions, and
31 labeling guidelines for recyclable, biodegradable, and
32 compostable products, including but not limited to
33 ASTM International standards, the Federal Trade
34 Commission's Green Guides, and any relevant state or
35 municipal guidelines; and
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37 (8) Recommendations for recyclable, biodegradable, and
38 compostable labeling standards or guidelines to
39 enhance clarity, reduce contamination, and improve
40 recycling and composting rates; and
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S.C.R. NO. 136

1 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Health is
2 requested to submit a report of its findings and
3 recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the
4 Legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of
5 the Regular Session of 2027; and

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7 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a certified copy of this
8 Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Director of Health.
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OFFERED BY: Mike Gabbard

