

MAR 16 2026

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# SENATE 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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29 WHEREAS, as renewable energy demand increases across the  
30 country, fossil fuel companies are seeking to recoup lost  
31 profits by increasing plastics production; and



1  
2 WHEREAS, in 2019, plastics generated 3.4 percent of global  
3 greenhouse gas emissions, and these emissions are projected to  
4 increase significantly as plastics production expands, with the  
5 plastics industry expected to surpass coal-fired power plants as  
6 a major leading source of greenhouse gas emissions; and

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

11  
12 WHEREAS, most packaging or products labeled as  
13 biodegradable or compostable are designed to break down in  
14 industrial composting facilities and will not break down under  
15 home composting conditions; and

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

22  
23 WHEREAS, as a result, biodegradable and compostable  
24 packaging and products often end up in landfills, which are not  
25 conducive to biodegrading or composting, leading to these  
26 materials either persisting or breaking down anaerobically,  
27 which can produce greenhouse gas emissions; now, therefore,

28  
29 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-third  
30 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2026,  
31 that the Department of Health is requested to conduct a study on  
32 recyclable, biodegradable, and compostable labeling in the State  
33 to determine if the labeling is accurate and non-deceptive; and

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35 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the study includes:

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37 (1) An assessment of products sold or distributed in  
38 Hawaii that have the chasing arrows symbol, including  
39 an evaluation of the types of such products that are  
40 or are not actually recyclable in the State;

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- 1           (2) An assessment of products sold or distributed in  
2           Hawaii that are labeled as biodegradable, including an  
3           evaluation of the types of such products that are or  
4           are not actually biodegradable in the State;  
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- 6           (3) An assessment of products sold or distributed in  
7           Hawaii that are labeled as compostable, including an  
8           evaluation of the types of such products that are or  
9           are not actually compostable in the State;  
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- 11          (4) An examination of the distinction between home  
12          compostable and industrial compostable products, and  
13          whether such products meet recognized industry  
14          standards, such as ASTM International standards for  
15          compostability;  
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- 17          (5) An analysis of the gaps between consumer expectations,  
18          product labeling practices, and actual recycling and  
19          composting capabilities and outcomes in the State;  
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- 21          (6) An analysis of common contaminants that may be  
22          introduced into the recycling stream, composting  
23          facilities, or the environment due to misleading or  
24          unclear recyclable, biodegradable, and compostable  
25          labeling;  
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- 27          (7) A review of existing standards, definitions, and  
28          labeling guidelines for recyclable, biodegradable, and  
29          compostable products, including but not limited to  
30          ASTM International standards, the Federal Trade  
31          Commission's Green Guides, and any relevant state or  
32          municipal guidelines; and  
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- 34          (8) Recommendations for recyclable, biodegradable, and  
35          compostable labeling standards or guidelines to  
36          enhance clarity, reduce contamination, and improve  
37          recycling and composting rates; and  
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39           BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Health is  
40           requested to submit a report of its findings and  
41           recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the



# S.R. NO. 128

1 Legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of  
2 the Regular Session of 2027; and

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4 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a certified copy of this  
5 Resolution be transmitted to the Director of Health.

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OFFERED BY: *Mike Gabband*

