



Earth Day 2021

Dear Grocery Store Manager:

Did you know that the United States throws out enough plastic every 16 hours to fill the Dallas Cowboys stadium, and every year we generate more than 35 million tons of plastic waste? Of that waste, less than nine percent is recycled. The remaining 90 percent is incinerated, winds up in landfills, or ends up as litter clogging streams, rivers and oceans.

More than 40 percent of all plastic produced is for single-use packaging. A trip to any grocery store reveals the dilemma consumers face every day when they try to avoid unwarranted single use packaging. Half of all the plastic produced worldwide has occurred in the past 15 years and 158 million tons of the 400 million tons of plastic made each year is for packaging. We are drowning in plastics.

Plastic does not break down; it breaks up and becomes microplastics. Plastic waste has been found in the deepest portions of our oceans, in tap water, in the air, in human feces, and on both the North and South Poles. Once this plastic is in our environment it is nearly impossible to recover it. Every year communities conduct clean-ups on beaches, on river fronts and around lakes. Millions of pounds of plastic wastes are retrieved but this is only a short-term fix. We need to turn the plastic tap off if we are to tackle this problem.

Both plastic polymers and the plasticizers used to create plastics have been shown to affect human health and the environment. Countless studies have been conducted that show plastics and plasticizers cause endocrine disruption, cancers, birth defects, impaired immunity, and reproductive disorders. It is estimated that we eat a credit card's worth of plastic every week.

All plastic—except for bioplastic—starts its life as a fossil fuel. Polyethylene, a plastic that is frequently used for single use packaging is created from ethane gas. This gas is produced from fracking. Citizens in the tri-state region of West Virginia, Ohio and Pennsylvania can testify to the damage of fracking. Scientific studies show this process creates toxic air and water pollution, radioactive wastes, and harms communities where fracking infrastructure is located. Plastics are also contributing to climate change.

The fossil fuel industry and plastics companies would like us to believe that recycling will solve the problem. But, fifty years after the "Keep America Beautiful" anti-litter campaign, the USA has only a nine percent rate for recycling plastic; recycling will not solve the problem. Consumers are worried about the widespread plastic pollution and the health effects caused by plastic itself as well as the production

processes. Consumers want to purchase less plastic, especially needless plastic packaging, but are finding it is hard to find products and produce not packaged in plastics.

We know plastic reduction is possible as stores like Aldi's in Ireland and others in the EU have made progress on cutting down on plastics. Some solutions to excessive plastics are: reusable bags for groceries and fresh produce, the use of plant based or bio-plastics for packaging, allowing shoppers to bring their own containers, using cardboard packaging for items such as pasta and beans.

We are asking you, as a grocery store manager, to help us stop the excessive use of plastic packaging. We urge you to take the following actions:

- Support legislation that supports reusable bags and phases out plastic shopping bags
- Support the Break Free From Plastic Pollution Act of 2020 (HR 5845) which is backed by more than 400 environmental groups and sponsored by Sen. Jeff Merkley and Rep. Alan Lowenthal. Learn more here: [www.breakfreefromplastic.org/pollution-act/](http://www.breakfreefromplastic.org/pollution-act/)
- Ask your suppliers to cut down on plastic packaging or find alternative eco-packaging
- Seek out and support alternative packaging
- Talk to your customers about the changes your store is trying to make and ask for their support and suggestions
- Support customers who are currently using reusable bags
- Follow the example of stores like Bulk Barn and Spouts that have reusable containers and bags
- Develop a comprehensive plastic reduction program with target dates for actions

Enclosed please find two Center for International Environmental Law reports:

Plastics & Health: The Hidden Costs of a Plastic Planet

Plastics & Climate: The Hidden Costs of a Plastic Planet

Signed,

On behalf of OVEC, the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, Dr. Randi Pokladnik, and volunteer Mary Wildfire, Chairman of the Board Francis Sullivan, Executive Director Vivian Stockman, and staff members Dani Parent, Sarah Carballo, and Tonya Adkins

Ben Hunkler, on behalf of Concerned Ohio River Residents

Robin Blakeman, on behalf of West Virginia Interfaith Power and Light

Linda Frame, President of the West Virginia Environmental Council

Allen Johnson, on behalf of Christians For The Mountains

Eric Engle, Mid-Ohio Valley Climate Action  
Edward Ketyer, M.D., Physicians for Social Responsibility Pennsylvania  
Kelsey McNaul, On behalf of the People Over Petro Coalition  
Kelsey McNaul, on behalf of Tackling the A-Z Impacts of Plastic  
Ashley Funk, Executive Director, James Cato and Melissa Marshall on behalf of Mountain Watershed Association  
Brook Lenker, on behalf of FracTracker Alliance  
Aileen Curfman, co-chair, on behalf of the West Virginia Sierra Club  
Leatra Harper: Freshwater Accountability Porrect  
Gillian Graber, on behalf of Protect PT  
Annie Deely, on behalf of ReImagine Turtle Creek Watershed and Airshed Communities Plus  
Amanda Kiger, on behalf of River Valley Organizing  
Nora Johnson, on behalf of Beaver County Marcellus Awareness Community  
Maren Cooke, on behalf of Putting Down Roots  
Greg Kochanski, on behalf of Ohio Valley Environmental Resistance  
PJ Pagano, on behalf of Protect Franklin Park  
Suzanne Watters, on behalf of Sustainable Sewickley  
Cathy Cowan Becker, on behalf of Simply Living  
Elaine Tanner, on behalf of Friends For Environmental Justice  
Rachael Hood, on behalf of WVU Post Landfill Action Network  
Kimberly Mann, on behalf of the Lakewood Community Solar Co-op  
West Shore Fact

And these individuals:

BJ McManama, Cindy Ellis, James Kotcon, Rebecca Ellis, Lyndsay Deitrick, Emma Pokladnik, Barbara Steinberg, Cindy Taylor, Julie DiCenzo, Giulia Mannarino, David Mintz, Nathan Blake, Lauren Schweiger, Matt Ferriolo, Loretta Pusateri, Patricia Gundrum, JC Kasten, Carol Hoover Oliver J Drumheller, Lois U Drumheller, Kari Pohl, Elaine Eastbourn, Tess Larchian, Hailey Burns, Sarah Channing, Stephen Bagstad, Linda New, Alicia Goddard, Alison Grant, Anne Caruso