

Chloe Reynolds

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S.113 Testimony

Did you know that a shocking 7.5 percent of plastic in the environment comes from straws and stirrers, according to an analysis based on trash collected by volunteers around the world (Washington Post)? It's true that single use plastics, specifically plastic straws, are ultimately destroying our environment. I personally don't want to live in a world that's being destroyed by the minute, and can assume that future generations wouldn't either. Future lives especially should not have to deal with any environment that's worse than what we have today. This is why it's about time for all businesses to switch to renewable types, and for plastic straws to be banned from our society.

Plastic is commonly termed "the ultimate pollution," taking around 1,000 years to decompose. Plastic straws and stirrers are in the top 10 list of plastic pollutants found in our environment according to the world economic forum. In fact EcoCycle.Org estimates that we use 500 million every single day in America; most of those ending up in the ocean, and all of them polluting our environment.

Most people wonder how this is even possible. They think, 'Aren't plastic straws recyclable?' This is technically true, however, Strawless Ocean states that most plastic straws are too lightweight to make it through the mechanical recycling sorter. They drop through sorting screens and mix with other materials and are too small to separate, thus contaminating recycling loads or getting disposed as garbage. Even if plastic straws were recyclable, humans tend to not follow the recycling and disposal rules, and often throw things away despite the symbol on the wrapping. As we know, plastic doesn't decompose, and that straw people potentially threw away will stay inside the earth, water, or innocent animal for a thousand years.

Plastic straws are especially harmful to marine life. How do plastic straws get into the ocean you may ask? Plastic straws end up in the ocean primarily through human error, often 1) left on beaches in coastal communities and seaside resorts globally 2) littered OR 3) blown out of trash cans (oftentimes overfilled) or transport boats and vehicles. Once they're in the ocean, plastic breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces known as "microplastics" rather than biodegrading or dissolving, which poses great threats to marine life including fish (Ocean Service Organization). Plastics may then unfortunately end up at our dinner table when serving seafood. Straws are one of the Ocean Conservancy's top 10 items found during beach cleanups, severely harming wildlife. In fact, it is estimated by the

Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences that by 2050, the plastics in our oceans will outweigh the fish, and 99% of all seabird species will have ingested plastic. It is extremely sad, and embarrassing to think that we could potentially cause that from our carelessness and attachment to plastic straws.

Overall, a change against single use plastics must be made. Just from looking at plastic straws alone, it is clear that they are only harming us. It's true that many people rely on drinking straws; if they're disabled, in a movie theater, or too young to hold a cup. A ban on plastic straws shouldn't limit them in any way, more than they already are. That would be discriminatory.

That's why only *plastic* straws should be banned specifically, which leaves businesses the responsibility to take initiative and distribute renewable options for those who request it. There are many types of renewable straws available to purchase singly, and in mass quantities. Options include paper (the most popular for the expense, and reliability), compostable (made of plant oils and starches, typically corn), metal, glass, silicone, bamboo, hay, ice, the list goes on. Granted, all of these options are much more expensive (ranging from around 3 to 13 cents per straw, while plastic are only 1). This makes people feel reluctant to make the renewable switch, for economic fear. However, I can argue that the price for switching to renewable is always a better deal than sacrificing our environment. That is why it's about time for plastic straws to be banned from our society, and for all businesses to make the switch to renewable straws.

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