

Testimony in support of H5492: Microplastics Reduction Act

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To Chair Bennett and the honorable Members of the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

Microplastics are by now a universally present, global pollutant. It has been known for a while that microplastics not only impact wildlife, but also enter human bodies in ever increasing quantities.

Yuck! Who wants to have their bodies accumulate plastics particles? Neither humans, nor wildlife, nor our environments and oceans are trash cans.

Unfortunately, there is more to it: recent evidence also indicates that microplastics have the potential for posing a serious health threat.

In a study¹ with 340 cardiovascular patients, microplastics were detected in cardiovascular disease-related carotid plaque: polyethylene microplastics were found in the plaque of 150 of the patients, PVC microplastics in 31 patients. From a 34 months follow-up post plaque removal, the study concluded that patients with carotid artery plaque in which microplastics were detected had a higher risk of a composite of myocardial infarction, stroke, or death from any cause at 34 months of follow-up than those in whom microplastics were not detected.

While more research still needs to be done to fully understand the health threat from microplastics, there is the potential of a substantial threat to life. The severity of this threat means that we cannot just accept the risk potential and “go on with life as usual”. We need to take prudent, precautionary action and eliminate at least intentional addition of microplastics to products that we use every day.

H7515 takes that action by

- defining microplastics,
- acknowledging the high level of pollution with microplastics, including ingestion by humans, and
- prohibiting sales and distribution in RI of any product containing intentionally added synthetic polymer microparticles (microplastics), by 2028.

In addition, the bill sets a requirement for testing for microplastics and for developing a testing plan, leading to developing and implementing a statewide microplastics strategy. This will also enable Rhode Island to contribute local experience and data to the ongoing global effort to understand impacts and develop policy and regulation for mitigating the microplastics threat.

¹ Microplastics and Nanoplastics in Atheromas and Cardiovascular Events: Marfella et al., New England Journal of Medicine 2024; 390:900-910: <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa2309822>

Since the bill was held and not voted on in 2024, I urge you to not lose more time and to bring the bill to a vote on the House floor in 2025. Waiting longer would be taking an unacceptable risk.

Thank you very much for considering my input, and thank you to Representative Boylan for introducing this important bill.



Dr. Hans Scholl

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