



Testimony in support of House Bill 8415

**AN ACT RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY -- PLASTIC WASTE
REDUCTION ACT**

Amber Schmidt, NE Zero Waste Organizer, Clean Water Action

Dear Chair Bennet and Vice Chairs Representative Phillips and Representative Carson, and all members of the House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony [in support of HB8415](#).

Rhode Island and the rest of New England are in a trash crisis. Connecticut and Massachusetts are shipping 40% of their waste to out-of-state landfills in Pennsylvania and Ohio, increasing residential tax burdens. Rhode Island's only landfill is expected to reach capacity in 2046, and if we do not act fast, we will find ourselves in a similar position to our neighboring states.

The legislature has listened to the concerns of residents across the Ocean State concerning non-recyclable and problematic plastics, and has enacted legislation banning expanded polystyrene, plastic bags, and straws unless requested. Like the materials mentioned above, black plastic also cannot be recycled due to the carbon black pigment that renders it invisible to detection by the Material Recovery Facilities (MRF) infrared scanner. Unfortunately, many people are unaware that black plastic cannot be recycled since those containers often still contain the recycling symbol. The universal "chasing arrows" is in the public domain; any manufacturer can print it on practically anything, leading to widespread consumer confusion. This causes well-intentioned residents to put black plastic in our curbside recycling bin, which contributes to recycling contamination and rejected loads from the MRF. Additionally, black plastic can be made from recycled electronics and contain toxic flame-retardant chemicals.

The simple solution is eliminating this problematic material from our consumer stream. For restaurants, there are comparable-priced containers to transition away from black plastic. The easiest switch is simply to purchase white polypropylene take-out containers, which can be recycled. Other comparable options include aluminum, clear plastic, paper, and even now some compostable foodware, which has decreased in prices.



For all these reasons, we strongly support HB 8415 and respectfully urge the Committee to support HB 8415.

Sincerely,

Amber Schmidt