



Sample Letter to Government Representatives

Reuse as a Climate Solution

Date

Names (*Insert names of legislators or legislative body - The Mayor, or The City Council*)

Address

Re: Support for reuse as a city/county/state climate mitigation strategy

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we are writing to express our significant support for evaluating consumption-based emissions inventories (CBEIs) and prioritizing source reduction and reuse as key climate mitigation strategies.

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the window for limiting global warming to relatively safe levels is rapidly closing.¹ With the planet's population at 7 billion and growing, products that are designed to be used for just a few minutes before they become waste is not sustainable.

Plastic packaging is the leading cause for increased demand for single-use plastics, representing 40% of the total production of plastic products.² If plastic production and use continue to grow, as planned, emissions could reach 1.34 gigatons per year by 2030 - equivalent to emissions released by more than 295 new (500-megawatt) coal-fired plants.³

The expansion of the plastics industry is fueling a petrochemical infrastructure buildout. At least 42 facilities opened since 2019, or are under construction or in the permitting process. They threaten the release of an additional 55 million tons of greenhouse gasses - the equivalent of 27 coal-fueled power plants.⁴ The impacts are the highest in Black & Brown, low-income, and Indigenous communities.

Emissions from food production account for 34% of all man-made greenhouse gas emissions being generated.⁵ Transport, packaging, retail, processing, consumption and end-of-life disposal make up 29% of the emissions created by food systems - while **food packaging alone accounts for 5.4% of all food system emissions.**⁶

Single-use disposable products produce large amounts of greenhouse gasses over their life-cycle, from extraction to end-of-life disposable. For example, the CO₂ emissions of 360 compostable fiber clamshells used once are 85.5 kgCO₂, while one polypropylene reusable clamshell used 360 times causes 1.27 kgCO₂ emissions.⁷ The carbon impacts of the compostable clamshells are therefore 68 times greater than the reusable alternative.⁸

Reusable food serviceware beats single-use alternatives through every environmental measure (climate, water, land use, waste, pollution). Reusables always hit a break-even point where they outperform the disposables, and the benefits to the environment accrue with each additional use past that point.⁹

Reuse offers a pathway away from the current extractive-based economy and towards a regenerative economy that is rooted in justice and equity. Non-toxic reuse reduces overall pollution, chemical exposure and litter, and reduces greenhouse gas emissions and provides safe local jobs.

Source reduction and reuse are valuable tools for cities and municipalities to achieve the goals laid out in their climate action plans (CAPs). However, it is critical that cities and municipalities develop a CBEI to uncover the embedded emissions associated with the products and packaging being consumed by their residents. In doing so, additional emissions will be found and will require the adoption of new and swift emissions reduction strategies – like reuse solutions.

For example, the City and County of Los Angeles developed an extensive CBEI which led to them setting specific reuse targets to lower their overall greenhouse gas emissions. At least 25% of all waste products and recyclables must be reused or repurposed by 2025, and 50% by 2035.¹⁰ This sets a precedent for reuse solutions as a climate and plastics mitigation strategy, and has been duplicated in similar cities such as San Francisco, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh.

We urge you to ACT NOW, and:

1. Mandate the use of consumption-based emissions inventories (CBEIs) to capture the embedded emissions associated with products and services
2. Update the existing climate action plan to include a source reduction and reuse section
3. Mandate specific reuse targets to reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions
4. Engage directly with diverse constituencies to develop new climate mitigation strategies that are rooted in justice and equity principles

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Endnotes

1 [A new IPCC report says the window to meet UN climate targets is vanishing](#). The Economist. April 4, 2022. Accessed April 5, 2022.

2 [Plastic & Climate: The Hidden Costs of a Plastic Planet](#). Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL). May 2019. Accessed April 12, 2022.

3 id.

4 Ocean Conservancy and McKinsey Center for Business and Environment, *Stemming the Tide: Land-based strategies for a plastic-free ocean* (2015). Cited in Ellen MacArthur Foundation, *The New Plastics Economy* (2016). Accessed March 4, 2022.

5 Crippa, M., Solazzo, E., Guizzardi, D. et al. [Food systems are responsible for a third of global anthropogenic GHG emissions](#). Nat Food (2021).

6 id.

7 [Reuse Wins Report](#), by Upstream. 2021. Accessed on March 4, 2022.

8 id.

9 id.

10 [Los Angeles Climate Action Plan](#). 2021. Accessed March 12, 2022.