

**Testimony of Matt Seaholm
President and Chief Executive Officer
Plastics Industry Association**

**Before the Subcommittee on Environment and Climate Change
Committee on Energy and Commerce
June 30, 2022**

Chairman Tonko, Ranking Member McKinley and Honorable Members of the Committee,

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to appear before you today. My name is Matt Seaholm and I am the President & CEO of the Plastics Industry Association. Originally founded in 1937 as the Society of the Plastics Industry, we strive to represent the entire supply chain of the plastics industry, in which nearly one million Americans are employed. Our membership includes material suppliers, equipment manufacturers, processors, and recyclers.

I very much appreciate the commitment of this committee to pursue solutions that will increase recycling rates and reduce waste. There's a saying in our industry: We love plastic. We hate plastic waste. The way we see it, any molecule of plastic material that leaves the economy is a waste. We need to collect, sort and ultimately reprocess more material—plain and simple. And that goes for all substrates, not just plastic.

For too long, too much of the recyclable material that was collected for recycling was shipped overseas. While countries like China were building their recycling infrastructure, America was asleep at the wheel. We weren't significantly investing in modernization or expansion of material recovery facilities or the necessary capabilities to keep up with the incredible innovation that has transpired in plastic products over the past 20 years. Now, America must play catch up.

So, the plastics industry is investing billions of dollars in recycling technologies and will continue to do so with billions more announced. But this is a shared effort and one that requires partnerships at every level of government. For Congress, I would suggest a number of ways that we can improve recycling rates in our country.

- 1) Increase investments in critical recycling infrastructure to ensure that collection, sortation and processing can keep up with the complexities of all materials in the marketplace. The EPA has started their process for granting resources included in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act that stem from Save Our Seas 2.0 legislation passed in the last Congress. It's a great start, but certainly more is needed.
- 2) Promote end-market development for the variety of plastic resins on the market to ensure that demand remains on recycled materials. Reasonable and attainable recycled content requirements can help spur investment and guarantee markets for recyclable material.
- 3) Encourage innovations in recycling technologies to ensure the variety of materials that cannot economically be recovered through traditional methods are included, moving towards a more circular economy. But perhaps more importantly, I urge the committee and Congress to not stifle innovation and promising new technologies that are needed to get us where we need to go.
- 4) Develop national standards and definitions related to recycling bringing greater efficiency to the collection, sorting and recycling of materials. Not a one-size-fits-all approach to recycling, but a consistent set of terms and guidance that will avoid unnecessary complexities that only make it harder to achieve our shared goals.

I would add that our association and our members support H.R. 8059, the “Recycling and Composting Accountability Act” and H.R. 8183, the “Recycling Infrastructure and Accessibility Act of 2022,” both of which are good steps in the right direction.

But unfortunately, we are very much opposed to Title 9 of H.R. 1512 the Clean Future Act and H.R. 2238, the “Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act of 2021.” In my time remaining, I would like to highlight the most concerning component of both bills.

The proposed moratoriums on permits for new or expanded plastics manufacturing facilities would be devastating to our industry, the nearly one-million workers we employ in the U.S., and the supply chains we support. By ceasing permits, these proposed bills would push plastics production to other countries—ones with much less stringent environmental regulations. This will greatly increase the carbon footprint of its transport by requiring greater journeys for it to reach the American marketplace.

Because the vast majority of plastic manufactured here comes from a byproduct of the natural gas refining process, the feedstock is plentiful and certainly cleaner than oil-based derivatives used elsewhere in the world.

Reshoring our manufacturing supply chains is a priority that crosses party lines. Plastic is essential for the production of everything from microchips to medical devices to electric vehicles. That’s right, it will be impossible for America to reach its climate goals without plastic.

Is too little plastic recycled? Yes. Can we build the necessary infrastructure to greatly increase our recycling rates? Again, the answer is absolutely yes. Our industry will continue to invest, but we would welcome the partnership of leaders like yourselves to get America’s recycling system where it needs to be.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today and I look forward to answering your questions.