

Congress of the United States  
Washington, DC 20510

June 9, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

We write to you to share our strong support for protecting our environment and our ocean from the devastating impacts of plastic pollution. We were excited to learn that United Kingdom Prime Minister, Boris Johnson has added to the agenda for the G7 Leaders' Summit the goal to start negotiations for a global agreement to address marine plastic litter and microplastics. Plastic pollution represents a global crisis that will require bold international cooperation to address. We write to urge your Administration's full participation and support for this process and other international forums to show America's commitment to leadership in addressing this global crisis.

Nearly 11 million metric tons of plastic waste enter the ocean every year – from land-based sources alone.<sup>1</sup> Without any action, this flow is expected to triple to nearly 29 million metric tons by 2040.<sup>1</sup> This plastic pollution causes incredible harm on wildlife through ingestion and entanglement – globally, 100,000 marine mammals die every year as a result of plastic pollution.<sup>2</sup> However, the impacts of plastic extend far beyond harming wildlife and polluting our shores – plastic production and waste management are directly contributing to climate change. The greenhouse gas emissions linked to this production are estimated to reach 1.3 billion tons by 2030, equivalent to 300 coal-fired power plants. We cannot tackle the issue of climate change or environmental justice without addressing plastic waste.

A recent study found that despite the United States only accounting for 4% of the global population in 2016, the U.S. generated 17% of all plastic waste and ranks third among countries contributing to coastal plastic pollution.<sup>3</sup> The science is clear – all this plastic impacts human health from toxic chemicals leaching out of plastic to the fact that the average person ingests nearly a credit card's amount of microplastics each week.<sup>4</sup> Americans are fed up with the plastic pollution crisis and broadly support many steps to tackle the plastic pollution crisis.

According to U.S. Census Bureau data, the U.S. exported 1.37 billion pounds of scrap plastic in 2020.<sup>5</sup> At least 40% of this plastic waste was exported to countries outside the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) that have high percentages of waste mismanagement, such as India, Indonesia, and Malaysia. The U.S. has been sending scrap recycling materials to Asia for several decades, but the unacceptable environmental and social impacts of this practice have become clear. The ability to properly handle these materials is overwhelming and the impact is past a crisis tipping point.

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<sup>1</sup> "Breaking the Plastic Wave: A Comprehensive Assessment of Pathways Towards Stopping Ocean Plastic Pollution." Pew Charitable Trusts.

<sup>2</sup> "Facts and Figures on Marine Pollution." United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

<sup>3</sup> Law, K.L. "The United States' Contribution of Plastic Waste to Land and Ocean." *Science Advances*.

<sup>4</sup> <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/abs/10.1021/acs.est.9b01517>

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. International Trade in Goods and Services, December 2020.

Plastic pollution has exploded into a global crisis that threatens our public health, economic security, and the future of our planet. We need bold action to tackle this crisis and we have a unique moment to work with our colleagues around the world to break free from plastic pollution. We are writing to encourage your Administration's full participation in international dialogues to establish a binding global agreement to address plastic pollution.

The G7 Leaders' Summit represents a vital opportunity to demonstrate American leadership on a critical international issue. It is important to address plastic pollution as an environmental, environmental justice, and climate crisis through green recovery efforts as the world aims to build back better from the COVID-19 pandemic. We encourage your Administration to participate in discussions to launch a global agreement to address marine plastic litter and microplastics in advance of the Fifth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly. We urge your Administration to advocate for a binding agreement that addresses both land- and sea-based sources and looks to upstream solutions for addressing this challenge through source reduction.

The U.S. is one of only 8 countries to not ratify the Basel Convention. While the U.S. signed the Basel Convention in 1990 and the U.S. Senate gave its advice and consent for ratification in 1992, lack of implementing legislation has prevented the U.S. from participating. We stand ready to work with you to ensure U.S. compliance with the Basel Convention and encourage your Administration to develop domestic regulatory policies to prohibit the export of plastic waste to countries outside the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

We believe the U.S. can show global leadership on plastic pollution by engaging in international discussions and implementing domestic policies that will effectively minimize our plastic waste. We thank you for your continued leadership and look forward to working with you on this issue.

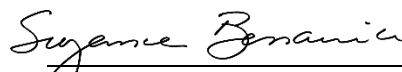
Sincerely,



Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



Alan Lowenthal  
United States Representative



Suzanne Bonamici  
United States Representative

\s\ Cory Booker

Cory Booker  
United States Senator

\s\ Thomas R. Carper

Thomas R. Carper  
United States Senator

\s\ Richard J. Durbin

Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator

\s\ Dianne Feinstein

Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator

\s\ Angus S. King, Jr.

Angus S. King, Jr.  
United States Senator

\s\ Ed Markey

Ed Markey  
United States Senator

\s\ Patty Murray

Patty Murray  
United States Senator

\s\ Bernard Sanders

Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator

\s\ Chris Van Hollen

Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator

\s\ Elizabeth Warren

Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator

\s\ Ron Wyden

Ron Wyden  
United States Senator

\s\ Jake Auchincloss  
Jake Auchincloss  
United States Representative

\s\ Nanette Diaz Barragán  
Nanette Diaz Barragán  
United States Representative

\s\ Earl Blumenauer  
Earl Blumenauer  
United States Representative

\s\ Julia Brownley  
Julia Brownley  
United States Representative

\s\ Salud Carbajal  
Salud Carbajal  
United States Representative

\s\ Ed Case  
Ed Case  
United States Representative

\s\ Kathy Castor  
Kathy Castor  
United States Representative

\s\ David N. Cicilline  
David N. Cicilline  
United States Representative

\s\ Emanuel Cleaver, II  
Emanuel Cleaver, II  
United States Representative

\s\ Steve Cohen  
Steve Cohen  
United States Representative

\s\ Gerald E. Connolly  
Gerald E. Connolly  
United States Representative

\s\ Danny K. Davis  
Danny K. Davis  
United States Representative

\s\ Peter A. DeFazio  
Peter A. DeFazio  
United States Representative

\s\ Mark DeSaulnier  
Mark DeSaulnier  
United States Representative

\s\ Ted Deutch  
Ted Deutch  
United States Representative

\s\ Raúl M. Grijalva  
Raúl M. Grijalva  
United States Representative

\s\ Jared Huffman  
Jared Huffman  
United States Representative

\s\ Mondaire Jones  
Mondaire Jones  
United States Representative

\s\ Ro Khanna  
Ro Khanna  
United States Representative

\s\ Doris Matsui  
Doris Matsui  
United States Representative

\s\ James P. McGovern  
James P. McGovern  
United States Representative

\s\ Grace Meng  
Grace Meng  
United States Representative

\s\ Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Eleanor Holmes Norton  
United States Representative

\s\ Jimmy Panetta  
Jimmy Panetta  
United States Representative

\s\ Chellie Pingree  
Chellie Pingree  
United States Representative

\s\ Mike Quigley  
Mike Quigley  
United States Representative

\s\ Mary Gay Scanlon  
Mary Gay Scanlon  
United States Representative

\s\ Jan Schakowsky  
Jan Schakowsky  
United States Representative

\s\ Kim Schrier  
Kim Schrier  
United States Representative

\s\ Robert C. Scott  
Robert C. Scott  
United States Representative

\s\ Darren Soto  
Darren Soto  
United States Representative

\s\ Marilyn Strickland  
Marilyn Strickland  
United States Representative

\s\ Thomas R. Suozzi  
Thomas R. Suozzi  
United States Representative

\s\ Mike Thompson  
Mike Thompson  
United States Representative

\s\ Rashida Tlaib  
Rashida Tlaib  
United States Representative

\s\ Paul D. Tonko  
Paul D. Tonko  
United States Representative

\s\ Ritchie Torres  
Ritchie Torres  
United States Representative

\s\ Juan Vargas  
Juan Vargas  
United States Representative

\s\ Nydia M. Velázquez  
Nydia M. Velázquez  
United States Representative

\s\ Peter Welch  
Peter Welch  
United States Representative

CC:  
Secretary Antony Blinken,  
The Honorable John Kerry,  
The Honorable Gina McCarthy,  
Secretary Debra Haaland,  
Secretary Gina M. Raimondo,  
Administrator Michael Regan,  
The Honorable Brenda Mallory.