



Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle)
P.O. Box 4025
Sacramento, CA 95812-4025

Subject: Support for Strong Producer Responsibility in SB 54 Implementation

Dear CalRecycle Team,

On behalf of the Surfrider Foundation's extensive chapter and student club network, comprising thousands of business owners, volunteers and other ocean-loving coastal recreation enthusiasts, we write to express our strong support for robust and effective implementation of the SB 54 Plastic Pollution Prevention and Packaging Producer Responsibility Act. We urge CalRecycle to ensure that responsibility for plastic reduction and end-of-life management falls squarely on producers and manufacturers—not on consumers.

As outlined in the proposed regulations, the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) program must prioritize source reduction of plastic packaging, phase out materials that are not truly recyclable or compostable, and significantly increase recycling and composting rates. To achieve these outcomes, producers should be required to use packaging certified by third parties to meet technical compostability and recyclability standards, as mandated under AB 1201. Clear, enforceable labeling requirements—such as those established in SB 343—are also critical for ensuring transparency and preventing misleading product marketing.

In California, we see firsthand the consequences of single-use plastics on our coastlines. This year alone, our beach cleanup volunteers have collected 23,714 plastic food wrappers, 2,149 plastic food containers, 6,118 plastic lids, 8,458 plastic straws, and 66,783 cigarette butts, along with thousands of other discarded plastic items. These numbers represent only a fraction of what washes onto our beaches and into the ocean, underscoring the urgent need for upstream solutions and producer accountability.

We have two areas of particular concern within the draft regulations:

- Chemical, advanced recycling, and related technologies: The current language opens the door for the use of costly and potentially harmful technologies that misrepresent their ability to recycle plastic waste. To preserve the integrity of SB 54, we strongly recommend a categorical prohibition on chemical and advanced recycling, as well as related processes.
- Categorical exclusions: The categorical exclusions added in the May 2025 draft regulations—and maintained in the August version—risk undermining the core intent of SB 54. By shifting costs onto other producers, local governments, and ratepayers, these provisions create a loophole that threatens the fairness and effectiveness of the extended producer responsibility framework. We recommend that this section be deleted, and producers facing unique challenges should go through the exemption process.

California has long led the nation in advancing environmental protections, and SB 54 represents a critical opportunity to accelerate the transition to a circular economy. Success will depend on shifting responsibility away from individuals—who are left with limited recycling options—and onto the companies that design, produce, and profit from single-use packaging and foodware. This shift not only protects the environment and wildlife, but also creates a more equitable and effective system for managing materials at the end of their life cycle.

We strongly urge CalRecycle to adopt regulations that fully reflect the intent of SB 54: holding producers accountable, reducing reliance on single-use plastics, and prioritizing materials that are genuinely compostable or recyclable. The California Surfrider Foundation chapter and student club network remain committed to supporting California's leadership in reducing plastic pollution and protecting our ocean, waves, and beaches.

Sincerely,

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