



**State Representative Erica C. Crawley
Ohio House District 26**

House Bill 491 Sponsor Testimony (as prepared)

Chair Wiggam, Vice Chair Stephens, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the House State and Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to stand before you today and provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 491 to establish February 15th as Plastic Pollution Awareness Day here in Ohio.

Earlier this year, I introduced a House Resolution that made February 15, 2020 Plastic Pollution Awareness Day. HB 491 would take the Resolution one step further by acknowledging Plastic Pollution Awareness Day in perpetuity. There are many things that can be done to protect and improve our environment for ourselves and for future generations. Plastic Pollution Awareness Day will encourage recycling by raising awareness to the harmful effects of plastic pollution.

The United States recycles just nine percent (9%) of its plastic trashⁱ and 22 million pounds of plastic debris enter the Great Lakes every year.ⁱⁱ We need to do more to prevent plastic pollution and HB 491 will create a heightened understanding of the importance of recycling plastics.

It takes plastic more than 400 years to break down because it is resistant to degradation, so the majority of it still exists in some form.ⁱⁱⁱ When we fail to recycle plastic cups, containers, forks, or straws, they end up in our local parks, streets, lakes, rivers and oceans. The increase in plastics in our waterways has brought significant harm to our wildlife due to plastic ingestion and entanglement. It is estimated that over 267 species of marine life are negatively impacted by plastic pollution worldwide.^{iv}

According to the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, recycling is an important way for individuals and businesses to reduce the waste they generate.^v The Federal EPA provides both environmental and economic benefits to reducing the use of single-use plastics including:

- Saving energy and money
- Lowering greenhouse gas emissions
- Reducing the amount of waste that requires recycling or ends up in a landfill
- Preventing pollution by reducing the need for new raw materials

- Sustaining the environment for future generations

This year has been dominated and devastated by COVID-19 and its effects on American lives. During the stay at home orders, there were several unintended consequences that resulted. Across the country, there was an increase in single use plastics and also an increase in plastic personal protective equipment (PPE). Overall, COVID-19 has caused a decrease in recycling of plastics.^{iv} While there is nothing we can do to change the plastics that have already been used, raising awareness on the effects of waste will contribute to its future reduction and the sustainability of our environment.

As we work to ensure that our environment is the best it can be, I ask for favorable consideration and passage of this legislation. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

ⁱParker, Laura, and Jason Treat. "Fast Facts about Plastic Pollution." National Geographic.

ⁱⁱ"Researchers Study Plastic Pollution in Great Lakes." RIT.

ⁱⁱⁱParker, Laura. "A Whopping 91% of Plastic isn't Recycled." National Geographic.

^{iv} "Impacts of Mismanaged Trash." EPA. Environmental Protection Agency.

^v "Reducing and Reusing Basics." EPA. Environmental Protection Agency.

^{vi}Tenenbaum, Laura. "The Amount Of Plastic Waste Is Surging Because Of The Coronavirus Pandemic." Forbes.