



House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

Hearing Date: March 20, 2025

Re: **Support for House Bill No. 5492: MICROPLASTICS REDUCTION ACT**

Chair David Bennett and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the League of Women Voters of Rhode Island and as a concerned resident, I am testifying in support of AN ACT RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY – MICROPLASTICS REDUCTIONS ACT.

Like PFAs (those forever chemicals that this committee and others have banned in prior sessions), microplastics are both everywhere and refuse to break down easily in the environment. These minute bits of plastic are in the air, the soil, and the water we drink as well as the rivers and bays that surround us. House Bill 5492 would prohibit the sale or distribution of products containing synthetic polymer micro particles in order to reduce the rate and severity of such pollution.

I knew microplastics were abundant, but I was astonished to learn the extent of their invasion almost into “my back yard”. My home sits on the bike path. Beyond that is Narragansett Bay. A recent study by two University of Rhode Island researchers revealed that more than 1,000 tons of microplastics cover the floor of this Bay creating a two-inch-thick artificial blanket (*Rhody Today*, URI, August 2023). The density of these micro and nano size particulates and their rate of accumulation are alarming. Narragansett is the largest natural estuary in New England. These foreign particulates infiltrate the fish, birds, and sea organisms that depend on this already-stressed ecosystem for their survival.

Through ingestion of food and water, contact with skin, and inhalation, humans, too, have become prime repositories of these tiny particles. Microplastics have been found in our digestive systems, our kidneys, and even our brains. Scientists and medical professionals are concerned about the long-term effects these unnatural particulates will have on both animal and human health. Researchers are rushing to understand the risks posed to our ecosystems and to the lives of both humans and animals.

In the meantime, House Bill 5492 “would prevent a manufacturer from selling, offering for sale or distributing into commerce any product containing synthetic polymer micro particles.” Furthermore, this bill requires that a testing plan of water, soil and other “environmental media” for the presence of these microplastics be established, along with a statewide microplastics strategy plan. Such oversight is surely needed.

Currently, California is the only state to require the monitoring of microplastics. Let us be proactive here in Rhode Island, and require our state to do the same.

Please pass H 5492. We need to monitor and limit the production of these microplastics as soon as possible.

Thank you,

Diana (Donnie) McGee

Diana (Donnie) McGee, Advocacy Committee Cochair

League of Women Voters of RI, One Richmond Square, Providence, RI 02903