

Reusable Oregon

Senate Bill 545: Legalizing Reusables in Oregon

Modernizing our Health Code to Allow for Reuse and Refill Systems

Many shoppers, and even some businesses, are not aware that Oregon's Health Code does not allow for consumer or store-owned reusable containers to be used in bulk sections or for produce in retail or in restaurants for takeout. Senate Bill 545 would clarify existing rules and expand sanitary opportunities under Oregon's Health Code for consumers and businesses alike to transition away from harmful single-use items.

The Problem

Oregon's laws currently do not allow for customers to bring reusable containers for refilling, shopping in bulk, buying produce, or bringing home take-out food. Many Oregonians use reusable containers for multiple reasons from financial and food accessibility to health and environmental reasons like the reduction of packaging and waste. The current code is unnecessarily prohibitive and is inconsistently enforced, creating cultural and business confusion about what is allowed. While the Oregon Department of Agriculture recently adopted new rules enabling reusable containers in retail establishments, the Oregon Health Authority has yet to adopt rules allowing for reusable containers in restaurants and other establishments.

Reuse Wins

In 2018, the Department of Environmental Quality published a report showing that the four attributes of packaging materials that are popularly considered sustainable are in fact rarely if ever a better option than reusables. Yet, nearly 1 trillion disposable food service products are used each year in the United States. Fortunately, there's a new reuse economy emerging for food service with the potential to completely disrupt the disposable food-service paradigm, increase food accessibility and reduce waste and plastic pollution. While many obstacles remain in reducing packaging and increasing sustainability, Oregon's health code should not be a barrier, but rather enable and encourage safe, practical reuse systems.



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**NEARLY 1 TRILLION
DISPOSABLE FOOD
SERVICE PRODUCTS ARE
THROWN AWAY IN THE
U.S. EVERY YEAR**

The Solution

We must update Retail Health Code and Food Sanitation Rules to safely allow for customers to bring their own reusable containers and enable businesses to create reuse systems. Senate Bill 545 directs the Oregon Department of Agriculture and Oregon Health Authority to update the retail and restaurant health codes and related rules respectively to address these reuse opportunities. The code recommendations allow for business flexibility to establish standards of procedures for contamination-free processes and supports greater freedoms for both the business and the customer.

It is time to guarantee Oregonians the right to reuse and refill by voting YES on SB 545.

THE RIGHT TO REUSE

Do you buy in bulk to reduce single-use packaging? Use reusable produce bags and refillable containers? Did you know that Oregon's Health Code actually does not allow for consumer or store-owned reusable containers? That's right, crazy as it sounds the reuse culture that many of us have participated in our entire lives has apparently happened under the radar of the health code.



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