

Governor Youngkin, Delegate Ware, and Senator Petersen:

As the current Chair of the Plastic Waste Prevention Advisory Council (PWPAC) for the Commonwealth of Virginia, I submit on behalf of the Council a final statement from the Council before our legislative authorization expires. It has been our privilege to serve the Commonwealth in this capacity during the past eighteen months. We look forward to seeing what next steps the General Assembly and the Administration will take to put Virginia at the forefront of eliminating plastic waste and pollution and creating a context that contributes to plastic packaging circular economy industry standards.

The final statement that follows represents policy and program ideas that this Council came to a consensus agreement on as the next steps for the Commonwealth. Please note that these ideas alone will not fully address the charge laid upon this Council and that a deeper dive into the fuller discussions held by this Council would be necessary to understand the strengths and weaknesses of all policy and program options. *However, the fact that they are consensus ideas for this Council, representing divergent interests and perspectives, conveys the importance of taking them very seriously.*

As stated previously, we commend the excellent Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) staff supporting the Council: Morgan Goodman, Meghann Quinn, Brook Keltner, and Keith Boisvert. Their professionalism, thoughtfulness, and interest in being mission-focused and solving the Commonwealth's plastic waste and pollution problems are inspirational.

Sincerely,

Dr. Rob Alexander, Chair

The members of the Council are listed below.

- Delegate Lee Ware – House Committee on Ag, Ches, NR
- Kathy Neilson – Designee of Senator Chap Petersen (Senate Committee on AG, Cons, NR)
- Dr. Rob Alexander – James Madison University
- Sharon Baxter – Designee of Director of Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)
- Jennifer Cole – Clean Fairfax
- Morgan Guthridge – Designee of Virginia Chamber of Commerce President
- Joseph Hilbert – Designee of State Health Commissioner (Virginia Department of Health)
- Anne Johnson – Resource Recycling Systems, Inc.
- Dr. Jennifer Russell – Virginia Tech
- Brett Vassey – Virginia Manufacturers Association (Alternate - Paige Wernig, VMA)

The Plastic Waste Prevention Advisory Council (the Council) is established as an advisory council, under § 2.2-2100, in the executive branch of state government. The purpose of the Council is to advise the Governor on policy and funding priorities to eliminate plastic waste impacting native species and polluting the Commonwealth's environment and to contribute to achieving plastics packaging circular economy industry standards.

<https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?201+ful+CHAP0798>

Alignment Statement

By consensus, the Council agrees that plastic waste and pollution is a significant and growing challenge impacting Virginia's natural resources and is an economic burden to municipalities and localities. Several barriers and gaps were identified that impede the Commonwealth's ability to address plastic waste and pollution effectively and to contribute to achieving circular economy industry standards for plastic packaging¹.

In Virginia, the most significant gaps between our present and desired future state pertain to:

- the lack of rigorous requirements for materials-based recycling reporting
- the lack of consistent plastic litter reporting
- the lack of state recycling goals by material
- the lack of state litter reduction goals
- the lack of state and local government capacities for recycling and litter enforcement
- the lack of funding for plastic pollution and circular economy initiatives (no Council alignment on a remedy for this)
- the lack of recycling infrastructure, such as collection programs, sorting technologies, and material recovery facilities
- the lack of Virginia-based secondary plastic materials markets
- the lack of clarity for consumers regarding plastic use, recycling, disposal, and litter

Consensus Recommendations for Getting Started

As such, we feel that the following ideas will *propel the Commonwealth towards an integrated system designed for producing, consuming, and managing plastics in Virginia that eliminates plastic waste impacting native species and polluting the Commonwealth's environment and contributes to achieving plastics packaging circular economy industry standards.*

There is consensus alignment on the Council for the following items intended to address some of the gaps, challenges, and opportunities found during the time span of this Council. ***These are not the only approaches to consider. Please review Appendix A for links to the complete set of discussions regarding all policy options considered.***

Consensus ideas for supporting our legislative charge related to a circular economy for plastics

- ✓ Create a state recycling and sustainable economic development team that establishes a supply and demand materials marketplace and circular economy investment incubators.
- ✓ Build state capacity to provide local government technical assistance, consumer education, and model ordinances to support regional shifts to a circular economy for plastics.
- ✓ Fund plastic materials reclamation and recycling grants for public and non-public recycling infrastructure.
- ✓ Establish materials-specific state recycling targets.
- ✓ Requiring haulers and recycling center operators to report on recycling rates by plastic type.
- ✓ Require state procurement for recycled content for plastic materials.

¹ This Council did not address circular economy industry standards themselves but rather the ways that the Commonwealth could contribute to a context that supports them.

- ✓ Link existing entrepreneurial and innovation grants (e.g., 4VA, Virginia Innovation Partnerships, etc.) to support technological innovation for sustainability within a circular economy for plastics.

Consensus ideas supporting our legislative charge related to eliminating plastic pollution

- ✓ Strengthen and improve the Litter Control and Recycling Trust Fund by increasing the total dollar amounts to levels commensurate with peer states, expanding funding eligibility to nonprofit organizations, improving marketing, providing technical assistance for preparing proposals, and streamlining grant reporting requirements.
- ✓ Craft model local government ordinances and standards of practice regarding dumpster management and ensuring sufficient disposal and recycling capacities for high and medium-density housing.
- ✓ Fund and support the capacities of qualified organizations to facilitate consumer education regarding litter and to engage in litter clean-up activities.
- ✓ Streamline collaboration between organizations, private entities, and state agencies to improve litter removal, especially in areas currently restricted (public and private) for clean-ups, such as rail and transportation corridors.
- ✓ Improve data collection and reporting on litter sources, quantities collected, and composition to measure progress toward litter reduction.

Appendix A

PWPAC Minutes

- June 17, 2021 - <https://commonwealthcalendar.virginia.gov/Event/Details/52178>
- August 24, 2021 - <https://commonwealthcalendar.virginia.gov/Event/Details/52893>
- September 29, 2021 - <https://commonwealthcalendar.virginia.gov/Event/Details/53262>
- February 25, 2022 – <https://commonwealthcalendar.virginia.gov/Event/Details/54687>
- May 19, 2022 - <https://commonwealthcalendar.virginia.gov/Event/Details/57504>
- August 26, 2022 - <https://commonwealthcalendar.virginia.gov/Event/Details/58485>
- September 29, 2022 - <https://commonwealthcalendar.virginia.gov/Event/Details/58909>
- November 3, 2022 – Cancelled
<https://commonwealthcalendar.virginia.gov/Event/Details/59165>
- December 9, 2022 - <https://commonwealthcalendar.virginia.gov/Event/Details/59620>
- March 31, 2023 - <https://commonwealthcalendar.virginia.gov/Event/Details/62707>
- May 11, 2023 - <https://commonwealthcalendar.virginia.gov/Event/Details/63076>