



The Plastic Pollution Crisis

According to a 2022 report published by Zero Waste Massachusetts, [40 percent](#) of total waste that ends up in landfills or incinerators in Massachusetts could have been recycled or composted. Many of these items, like plastic takeout containers, beverage bottles, and bags, are incinerated, inappropriately discarded, or can take upwards of 400 years to decompose.

Millions of tons of plastic waste end up in our ocean and waterways every year. Once in the water, the plastic can break down into smaller microplastics, harm marine wildlife, and litter coastlines and beaches. Between losses to the fishing industry, the tourism and recreation industry, and coastal clean-up costs, plastic pollution costs upwards of [\\$19 billion](#) in economic damage to global marine ecosystems annually. Recycling alone cannot solve this plastic pollution problem. That is why there is a growing movement to transition to a circular economy system that keeps materials and products in circulation for as long as possible. Circular economy projects present a potential solution to the plastic pollution crisis. Currently, circular economy projects receive little government support and do not qualify for Massachusetts' Recycling Business Development Grant program. The lack of grant funding for reusable alternatives hinders our ability to prevent these materials from littering our coastlines, landfills, and ocean.

Transition Towards a Circular Economy

In Massachusetts' Solid Waste Master Plan and MassDEP's Reduce and Reuse Action Plan, the State declares that a zero-waste future is a goal. To help meet the state's goal, Massachusetts must move beyond recycling efforts and invest in the transition to a circular economy. Supporting a circular economy decreases economic waste, environmental degradation, and the amount of plastic trash that enters landfills, waterways, and the ocean.

H.B847/S.B534, filed by Senator Susan Moran and Representative Kathleen LaNatra, helps the Commonwealth transition towards a circular economy by updating state waste system plans to prioritize a circular economy transition and develop education and outreach programs to inform the public and businesses on how to support and participate in the transition. Recognizing the costs associated with transitioning to circular economy practices, the bill establishes a fund to aid Massachusetts small businesses in making the transition and prioritizes minority-owned and women-owned businesses and businesses located in or providing substantial services to environmental justice communities.