



Hawaii Legislative Council Members

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Wainiha Country Market
Hanalei

Russell Ruderman
Island Naturals
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Maile Meyer
Na Mea Hawaii
Honolulu

Tina Wildberger
Kihei Ice
Kihei

L. Malu Shizue Miki
Abundant Life
Natural Foods
Hilo

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Erica Perez, Chair
Dorothy Norris, Vice Chair
Wesley R. Segawa, Director
Environmental Management Commission

Wednesday, May 28, 2025
9:00 AM Kona Council Chambers

RE: Agenda Item VI.2 - Recycle Hawaii update

Dear Chair Perez, Vice Chair Norris, Director Segawa, and Members of the Commission,

The Chamber of Sustainable Commerce (CSC) represents over 460 small businesses and entrepreneurs across the state that strive for a triple bottom line: people, planet and prosperity. As small business owners who believe we can strengthen Hawaii's economy without hurting workers, consumers, communities or the environment, we ask the EMC to engage with community experts, including land and water protectors, to assess direct and indirect impacts of any proposed recycled plastic manufacturing development projects that come before the Commission.

The CSC strongly opposes the proposed construction of a recycled plastic manufacturing plant on Hawai'i Island. While such projects may have once seemed like forward-thinking solutions, today we know better. Plastic recycling is not the panacea it was marketed to us to be - **there is no clean way to recycle plastic**. Heating and reforming plastic is shown to release harmful particles into the environment, affecting human health and all life forms. In addition, studies from global environmental agencies make it clear: less than 10% of plastic ever produced has been effectively recycled. The vast majority ends up in landfills, incinerators, and polluting our oceans.

Building a facility that perpetuates the production and use of plastic—under the guise of sustainability—is both outdated and deeply disturbing. We are in the midst of a colonization crisis, a reckoning of all of the extractive practices and dismissive behaviors that now *demand us* to respect the land, water and future generations.

Commodifying one of our most sacred and essential resources, *wai*, is particularly egregious. Our freshwater is not a product to be captured, packaged in single-use plastic and sold for profit—here or shipped off-island. The environmental degradation left behind directly contradicts the values of *mālama 'āina*.

Instead of investing time, land, water, human capital and fiscal resources in outdated infrastructure that reinforces a toxic, disposable economy, the CSC hopes the EMC can push for truly regenerative practices. Too often, words like “sustainable,” “eco-friendly,” and “green” are deployed as marketing tools rather than meaningful commitments. True sustainability requires systems change, not cosmetic tweaks to an industry that continues to generate waste, pollution and carbon emissions.

A recycled plastic manufacturing plant is not regenerative, nor aligned with Hawaii’s ecological, cultural or ethical imperatives. We need full regulatory scrutiny and public input on this project. The proposed recycled plastic manufacturing plant will result in an estimated 300,000 pounds of plastic sludge waste per week. Where will that go?

We request that this proposed plastic recycling project to be added to the EMC’s next meeting agenda. Thank you for your time and attention to the environmental, public health, cultural and social, economic and ethical and psychological impacts that a recycled plastic manufacturing facility could have on our island community.

Respectfully submitted,

Tanya Yamanaka Aynessazian
Principal Contractor
Chamber of Sustainable Commerce