

From: [Julie Stowell](#)
To: [cohdem](#)
Subject: Re: testimony for agenda item IV 2
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While consumers are bombarded with messaging generated by the plastic industry touting recycling as a critical strategy for reducing the impacts of plastic pollution, the truth is it only compounds the problem. The only solution to plastic pollution is a steep reduction in plastic production and consumption, with environmental and social justice experts putting the required rate of reduction at 75%.

When we look at the ways plastic is currently being used with the aim of achieving this goal, considering the fact that over a billion single-use plastic beverage bottles are sold every day, discontinuing their use becomes one of the easiest and most impactful measures we can take. As we move towards implementing true solutions, practices that undermine them must be avoided by all means. Increasing plastic recycling infrastructure at a time when we need to abandon the use of plastic in every way possible undermines the greater goal. Plants designed to recycle plastic can only be built with multi-million dollar investments that can only be repaid by processing millions of tons of discarded plastic for decades to come.

A commitment to building a recycling plant that processes single-use plastic beverage bottles is a commitment to continue using and discarding single-use plastic beverage bottles. This is not the commitment Hawaii needs to make.

Hawaii currently has a program designed to move discarded single-use plastic beverage bottles out of the state, diverting them from the landfill and sending them to places where recycling infrastructure already exists. Our Hi5 program provides an important platform for transitioning away from plastic beverage bottle usage. Malama One's plastic recycling scheme will undermine the purpose of the program by locking us into the continued use of these containers while diverting approximately 30% of the plastic it processes to Hawaii Island's only landfill at Puuanahulu. The push to build a recycling plastic plant here undermines the growing movement to establish reuse infrastructure.

It is important to note that Malama One's plans for managing waste plastic go well beyond the construction of this facility. It is also scheming to pass legislation that would increase the Hi5 deposit fee and require all beverage manufacturers to use the recycled plastic thermoforms it produces, both as a means to increase capital flow to its venture.

At a time when awareness about the dangers of plastic and the impacts it has on the environment is increasing, and markets are aligning with more responsible consumption trends, Malama One's plan to build a recycling facility is nothing more than an attempt to enrich its investors and greenwash the business model of its major investor, Waiakea Water, which profits from the extraction of Hawaii's water and for sale out of state.

Hawaii has nothing to gain from this scheme. We need to continue to move away from a reliance on beverage containers made from fossil fuel plastics. We need to support Hawaii's goals to become more sustainable and independent by supporting businesses that bottle local water for local consumption. Hawaii County should not allow plastic from the Hi5 program to be diverted to its only landfill. At the very least, Hawaii County should insist that Malama One find other means of managing the toxic waste it generates.

I find it ironic that the choice of name, Malama One, would seem to indicate they will take care of the environment by what they are planning to do. Dumping microplastic sludge into our landfill is not sustainable nor is it taking care of the earth.

Mahalo for listening to the concerns of our community.
Julie Stowell

Hamakua, Hawaii