Plastic Waste Reduction and Recycling Research: U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Science, Space and Technology Hearing

Walter Wright, Jr.
wwright@mwlaw.com
(501) 688.8839

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The Subcommittee on Research and Technology of the United States House of Representatives Committee on Science, Space and Technology held a June 24th hearing titled:

Plastic Waste Reduction and Recycling Research: Moving from Staggering Statistics to Sustainable Systems ("Hearing")

The focus of the *Hearing* was the search for solutions to address plastic waste generation.

Key issues addressed included:

- Understanding barriers to the current recycling system
- Potential for upstream solutions
- Research, technology and data gaps that need to be filled
- The need for standards development
- Development of assessment models to achieve sustainable systems

Witnesses at the Hearing and their comments included:

Ms. Keefe Harrison

Chief Executive Officer

The Recycling Partnership

- Works with companies, communities and policymakers to strengthen U.S. community recycling programs
- Discusses moving the linear economy towards a circular system
- Technology has an important role to play when it comes to plastics' role in the United States recycling system
- Noting how can plastics products be better designed for recycling purposes
- How different kinds of resins in the marketplace can be part of a more circular economy
- How can standards be developed to make sure businesses know what quality of recycled feedstock they are getting?

Dr. Marc Hillmyer

Director and Principle Investigator

University of Minnesota National Science Foundation Center for Sustainable Polymers

- Works in the field of polymer science
- Provides information which includes:
- Overview of research efforts carried out in the National Science Foundation Center for Sustainable Polymers
- Provides views on the broader research needs, opportunities and challenges for federal research in bio-based, compostable, and alternative plastics and in chemical advanced recycling
- Provides input on proposed research activities at the National Science Foundation, Department of Energy and any other research and standards development activities directed under legislation being considered

Dr. Gregory Keoleian

Director, Center For Sustainable Systems,

Peter M. Wege Professor of Sustainable Systems

School for Environment and Sustainability, Professor, Civil and Environmental Engineering,

Co-Coordinator, Engineering Sustainable Systems Program, University of Michigan

- Research focuses on the development and application of lifecycle models and sustainability metrics to guide the design and improvement of products and technology
- Provides a scope of the plastics waste problem noting:
- Plastic waste crisis is more than a packaging waste problem
- Multiple technical and economic barriers limit plastics material recovery
- System analysis tools are necessary to overcome challenges
- Provides a number of recommendations

Mr. Joshua Baca

Vice President, Plastics Division

American Chemistry Council

- States American Chemistry Council is committed to creating a more circular economy for plastics
- Notes development of “roadmap to reuse” (outlining what is described as a vision instead of actions to mobilize the entire plastics value chain to achieve goals)
- Industry is working on three core areas:
- Public policy development
- Value chain coordination
- Private sector investments
- Describes the need for plastic waste reduction and recycling research
- Notes role of advanced recycling for plastics
- States momentum for advanced recycling is accelerating across the United States

A link to the witnesses’ written statements and their testimony can be found here.