

August 13<sup>th</sup> 2020  
Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard  
Hawai'i District Office  
300 Ala Moana Blvd., Rm 5-104  
Honolulu, HI 96850

RE: Request to co-sponsor bill H.R. 5845, Break Free From Plastic Pollution Act

Dear Congresswoman Gabbard,

On behalf of the Pacific Whale Foundation based in Maui, I am writing to ask for your support of the Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act (H.R. 5846). Addressing the plastics crisis is critical to protecting our environment and our nature-based economy here in Hawaii. As a nonprofit organization that has dedicated the past 40 years to researching and mitigating major stressors to whales and dolphins, we believe our community and our nation cannot wait any longer to tackle this urgent problem.

Our oceans face a growing threat from plastics; the equivalent to roughly a garbage truck full of plastic is dumped into the ocean every minute. Plastic pollution is harming whales, dolphins, sea turtles and other marine animals and has been found in every corner of the world. Despite being the most isolated island chain in the world, marine debris is a consistent problem in Hawai'i. Our research shows that over 80% of the debris we remove from Maui's shorelines is plastic, with similar trends observed through the Hawaiian archipelago. Home to 18 different species of whales and dolphins, plastic pollution in Hawaii has been shown to pose a significant threat to these species, which have important cultural and economic value. Current projections show global plastic production increasing fourfold between 2014 and 2050, far outpacing recycling and resulting in more plastic in the ocean.

The Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act is the first comprehensive bill in Congress to effectively address the plastic pollution crisis. The bill would put in place a set of policies to effectively tackle the challenge of plastic pollution, including phasing out some of the single-use plastics commonly found polluting our beaches, such as plastic bags, food ware made from expanded polystyrene and plastic utensils. The bill will also institute a nationwide beverage container refund program, require product producers to take responsibility for their product waste, establish minimum recycled content requirements, prevent U.S. plastic waste from being shipped to developing countries, and put a temporary pause on new and expanded plastic production facilities until EPA updates Clean Water Act and Clean Air Act standards. The bill will make strides in mitigating the marine debris issue here in Hawai'i and abroad.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation. My team of scientists and policy advocates would look forward to discussing this issue with you in greater detail.

Sincerely,



Harrison Schmitt  
Programs Director  
Pacific Whale Foundation



*Protecting the ocean through science and advocacy, and inspiring environmental stewardship*