

DATE

Dear **STORE MANAGER**,

I love **STORENAME** and shop there often. I know that COVID has undoubtedly made your job significantly harder and more stressful and I want to thank you for staying open during the pandemic and for taking additional steps to help keep your customers and staff safe during the pandemic.

I'm also reaching out today to ask you to please resume allowing customers to bring their own reusable bags and containers from home and to open up your bulk bins and refillable options again.

Although I completely understand why the store stopped allowing reusable bags and containers when the pandemic began, new data has come to light that shows that these measures are not necessary. In addition, the surge in single-use plastic usage due to the mistaken belief that it is safer during COVID is creating a tremendous amount of plastic waste and pollution that our community does not have the capacity to deal with effectively.

A group of more than 115 scientists and public health experts released [a statement](#) on June 22, 2020 reassuring the public of the safety of reusable containers and reminding people that disposable plastics carry the same risks of infection as their reusable counterparts¹.

Reusable bags, bottles and other containers are no riskier than single-use plastic versions. According to the scientists' statement, "one can assume that any object or surface in a public space — reusable or disposable — could be contaminated with the virus. Single-use plastic is not inherently safer than reusables, and causes additional public health concerns once it is discarded."

It also does not appear that any of these items pose a documented risk, whether they are single-use or reusable. According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), "The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person...between people who are in close contact with one another, through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks." While "it may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or 1 object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes," aerosolized droplets are the only documented method of COVID-19 transmission to date. So while it makes perfect sense to continue to enforce social distancing and mask wearing in the store, there's no data proving that resuming the use of reusable bags and containers or of bulk bins poses a risk of transmitting COVID-19.

By contrast, continuing to use single-use plastic has a documented risk to both our environment and human health. Consider, the following facts about single-use plastic:

¹ <https://storage.googleapis.com/planet4-international-stateless/2020/06/26618dd6-health-expert-statement-reusables-safety.pdf>

[Plastics recycling is largely a myth](#)^[1] – only 9% of all the plastics ever produced have been recycled. And even the small amount of plastic that does get recycled is [only reused once or twice before ending up in a landfill](#)^[2], incinerator or ocean and all of these final resting places are bad news for both our environment and human health.

This is a BIG problem because plastic does not biodegrade. It only breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces which then work their way into our air, water, soil and the bodies of fish, wildlife and, yes, all of us humans. A recent study by Australia's University of New Castle found that [we're all consuming roughly a credit card's worth of plastic each week!](#)^[3] And **that's a serious problem because plastics are endocrine disruptors and early studies have shown that [they increase our risk of obesity, cancer, infertility, diabetes, and developmental disorders](#)**, at a minimum^[4].

Nine million metric tons of plastic enter our oceans each year. Scientists predict that there will be one pound of plastic in the ocean for every three pounds of fish by 2025 and [more plastic trash in the ocean than fish by 2050](#)^[5]! In the meantime, [seabirds are dying at alarming rates](#) with bellies full of plastic^[6], [dead whales are washing up on beaches with stomachs full of plastic](#) on a regular basis in countries around the world^[7], and if you haven't watched the deeply painful video of the poor [sea turtle with the plastic straw lodged in its nose](#)^[8], you should spend 3 minutes doing so.

Plastic packaging is also a significant contributor to our climate change crisis. Plastics are made from toxic chemicals and a byproduct of hydrofracking. Their production relies on and perpetuates the extraction of fossil fuels which is the primary cause of our climate crisis and which we must address in short order if we hope to continue to enjoy life on this planet.

Given all of the above well-documented environmental and public health threats from single-use plastic and the fact that scientists and public experts have stated that reusables pose no increased risk of spreading COVID-19, **I urge you to lift the ban on reusable bags and containers and to bring back your bulk/refillable options the store ASAP.**

I thank you, again, for your efforts to keep your staff and customers safe and fed during the pandemic.

Thank you also for taking the time to consider my request. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

YOUR NAME

YOUR MAILING ADDRESS

YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS AND/OR PHONE NUMBER

[1] <https://www.forbes.com/sites/lauratenenbaum/2019/05/15/these-three-plastic-recycling-myths-will-blow-your-mind/#79f084cd75f0>

^[2] <https://earth911.com/business-policy/how-many-times-recycled/>

^[3] <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-environment-plastic/you-may-be-eating-a-credit-cards-worth-of-plastic-each-week-study-idUSKCN1TD009>

^[4] <https://www.ciel.org/news/plasticandhealth/>

^[5] <https://www.businessinsider.com/plastic-in-ocean-outweighs-fish-evidence-report-2017-1>

^[6] <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2015/09/15092-plastic-seabirds-albatross-australia/>

^[7] <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/02/world/europe/plastic-whale-dead-italy.html>

^[8] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4MPHbpmP6_I

^[9] <https://www.consumerreports.org/food/how-to-eat-less-plastic-microplastics-in-food-water/>

^[10] <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/mar/15/microplastics-found-in-more-than-90-of-bottled-water-study-says>

<https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.est.9b01517>