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Press Statement from PSI CEO Scott Cassel on Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act

Thank you, and Good afternoon. I'm Scott Cassel, CEO and Founder of the Product Stewardship Institute – or PSI – a national non-profit organization that has worked to build the capacity for product stewardship in the United States for the past 20 years.

We do this by forming partnerships with state and local governments, industry, and environmental advocates to reduce the health and environmental impacts from consumer products and packaging.

The centerpiece of our work hinges on a concept called Extended Producer Responsibility – or EPR – which requires manufacturers to take financial and management responsibility for their products and packaging when they reach the end of their useful life.

PSI developed an EPR model for packaging, and today's bill, which has EPR at its core, incorporates that model. Eight states have introduced, or are currently developing, packaging EPR bills this legislative session.

Here's the situation we're all facing with packaging: Over the past 50 years, municipalities and taxpayers have taken on the responsibility for recycling. Today, the system is unfairly burdening communities across the country with increasingly costly and complex waste. At the same time, recycling rates are stagnant, or even falling. Costs have soared. Companies cannot reliably source the recycled materials they need. And citizens are confused. Put simply: the current recycling system is serving no one's interests well.

EPR laws provide sustainable funding for recycling by shifting the burden from local governments and taxpayers to packaging producers and brand owners – those who decide what packaging to put on the market in the first place.

So with EPR at its core, today's bill takes the critical step to require those making and consuming materials to pay their fair share and to

internalize those costs in the products we buy. In other words, it removes a tax from all of us and instead puts that cost onto those who create and consume packaging.

For *producers*, the bill provides financial incentives to use packaging materials that have lower environmental impacts. It levels the playing field so they can compete fairly without free riders. It allows producers to develop a cohesive recycling system to replace our current fragmented one. And, by fostering healthy markets, it will help producers reach their publicly stated goals for using more post-consumer recycled materials.

EPR is the basis for 119 U.S. laws in 33 states on 14 product categories, including electronics, paint, batteries, mattresses, pharmaceuticals, and carpet. These systems have significantly increased recycling, created jobs, saved municipalities millions of dollars, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions. EPR systems have been in place for packaging for up to 35 years in Europe, Canada, Brazil, Chile, Israel, China, and other countries. We know it works.

I want to sincerely thank Senator Udall and Representative Lowenthal for taking a bold step to address a financial and environmental crisis that affects communities across this country. EPR is the only large-scale solution that will significantly transform our recycling system for the benefit of communities, citizens, and corporations. It's the game changer we all need.

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