To: GrubHub, UberEats, Doordash, Delivery.com, Caviar, Seamless, Postmates

July 14, 2020

RE: Request to change your default food delivery ordering process to “Opt In” for single-use utensils, napkins, condiments, and straws.

Dear food delivery services,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we request that you change your default food delivery process to one that does not automatically include utensils, napkins, condiments, or straws. Instead, customers would need to specifically request such items when they place their order for delivery — “opting in” to receive the specific items they want — reducing costs to restaurants and taking an important step to protect our environment.

During the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, our organizations’ primary focus continues to be the health and safety of our communities, volunteers, members and supporters. We thank your businesses for the important role they have played delivering food during these difficult times.

We would also like to acknowledge the work of HabitsofWaste.org, whose campaign, #CutOutCutlery, you may be familiar with.

Most food delivery platforms currently operate under an "opt out" model for utensils, napkins, condiments, or straws. While we see this as a first step towards reducing waste from unwanted foodware, the default is that every order contains these items regardless of whether the customer needs them. Also, reports of customers still receiving those items after choosing not to receive them are widespread and common. Therefore, we ask that all food delivery platforms switch from an "opt out" model to an "opt in" model, and ensure that their participating restaurants are implementing these changes.

Similar to how customers choose exactly which toppings they want on their pizza, customers should also be able to opt in to exactly which utensils, napkins, condiments, or straws they want.

We are sure you are aware of the single-use plastic pollution problem in our country. From streets and beaches burdened by single-use litter, to fenceline communities near oil refineries and ethane crackers, to the communities living near landfills and incinerators, to the potential health effects of finding microplastics in our food and our bodies - these are all perpetuated by the use of single-use plastic foodware.

It is now estimated that 8.75 million metric tons of plastic enter our ocean each year from land-based sources, with a great majority of that waste generated in the consumption of food and beverages. According to the UN Environment Report, only 9% of all plastics ever created have been recycled--with most still existing in their original form--whether buried in a landfill where they will take centuries to break down, or littered in our communities, parks, waterways, and oceans. Recycling can be helpful for some materials if done right, but it is not the panacea to our plastic pollution problem.

Some companies have introduced plant-based or bio-plastic products, often labeled as biodegradable or compostable, as an alternative to traditional plastics. However, claims that these products are
compostable are misleading, as these plastics require a commercial composting facility for processing, which are rarely available. Regardless of compostability claims, bioplastics will generally be sent to the landfill or incinerated.⁴

We call on you to show leadership by making your business’s default food delivery process such that customers must “opt in” to receive specific utensils, napkins, condiments, or straws—and ensure that your participating restaurants are implementing these changes. Such a process would allow restaurants to save money by expending less of these extras that are often unwanted by the customer.

Thank you for considering our request and please contact Matt Gove at mgove@surfrider.org with any questions.

We look forward to hearing your response in the weeks ahead.

Sincerely,

Judith Enck, President, Beyond Plastics

Jennie Romer, Legal Associate, Surfrider Foundation

Christy Leavitt, Plastics Campaign Director, Oceana

Eric Goldstein, Senior Attorney, Natural Resources Defense Council

Melanie Duchin, Ocean/Plastics Campaigner, Greenpeace

Sheila Morovati, President & Founder, Habitofwaste.org

Ross Macfarlane, Vice President, Sierra Club

Miriam Gordon, Policy Director, UPSTREAM

Julie Tighe, President, New York League of Conservation Voters

Alison Young, Interim Program Director, The 5 Gyres Organization

Delia Ridge Creamer, Oceans Campaigner, Center for Biological Diversity

Cassia Patel, Program Director, Oceanic Global

Christina Manto, Assistant Director, US Policy & Advocacy Wildlife Conservation Society

Alex Truelove, Zero Waste Director, U.S. Public Interest Research Group

Ben Kogan, Founder and CEO, Reusable Solutions

Jeff Twine, President, Upper West Side Recycling
Melissa Elstein, Secretary, West 80s Neighborhood Association
Elizabeth Moran, Environmental Policy Director, New York Public Interest Research Group
Jen Chantartratanapichate, Program Director, Sixth Street Community Center
Lisa Bloodgood, Director of Advocacy and Education, Newtown Creek Alliance
Nicole Kozlowski, Content and Communications Committee, Zero Waste Youth USA
Heidi Sanborn, National Stewardship Action Council
Katherine O'Dea, Executive Director, Save Our Shores
Leslie Mintz Tamminen, Director, 7th Generation Advisors
Martin Bourque, Executive Director, Ecology Center
Heather Trim, Executive Director, Zero Waste Washington
Stiv Wilson, Co-Director, Peak Plastic Foundation
Kathi King, Director of Outreach and Education, Community Environmental Council
Jerry White, Jr., Executive Director, Spokane Riverkeeper
Alyssa Barton, Policy Manager, Puget Soundkeeper Alliance
Neha Dhanik, Program Director, Sustainable Westchester
Joanie Steinhaus, Program Director, Turtle Island Restoration Network
Patricia Capparelli, Chairperson, Rye Sustainability Committee
Leatra J Harper, Managing Director, Fresh Water Accountability Project Ohio
Christopher Chin, Executive Director, The Center for Oceanic Awareness, Research, and Education (COARE)
Dianna Cohen, CEO & Cofounder, Plastic Pollution Coalition
Clare Miflin, Founder, Center for Zero Waste Design
Cynthia Matherly, Cofounder, Strawless Oregon
Katie Fleming, Community Engagement Director, Friends of the San Juans
Colleen Weiler & Jessica Rekos, Fellows, Whale and Dolphin Conservation
David Perk, Policy Team, 350 Seattle
Grace Lee, ReThink Disposable Director, Clean Water Action
Jane Selden, Climate Activist, 350NYC
Michael Doshi, Director of Partnerships, Algalita Marine Research & Education
Ted Sullivan, Sr. Research Coordinator, Bringit
Baani Behniwal, Policy Analyst, Californians Against Waste
Nora Nickum, Ocean Policy Manager, Seattle Aquarium
Emily Parker, Coastal and Marine Scientist, Heal the Bay
Karen Goodheart, Member, It’s Easy Being Green
Kari J Docter, Co-chair, District 3 Green Schools Group
Shakira Provasoli, Educator, Nysunworks
Emily Fano, Senior Education Manager, National Wildlife Federation
Yvonne Taylor, Vice President, Gas Free Seneca
Joseph Campbell, President, Seneca Lake Guardian
Hannah Testa, Founder, Hannah4Change
Manna Jo Greene, Environmental Director, Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, Inc.
Peter Blair, Policy Attorney, Clean Ocean Action
Marcie Gallagher, Environmental Associate, Vermont Public Interest Research Group
Vicki Nichols Goldstein, Founder & Executive, Director Inland Ocean Coalition
Veronique Pittman, Board of Directors, Green Schools Alliance
Sue Chiang, Pollution Prevention Director, Center for Environmental Health
Kate Kurera, Deputy Director, Environmental Advocates New York
Patricia J Wood, Executive Director Grassroots Environmental Education
Don Riepe, Director, Northeast Chapter American Littoral Society
Tina Lieberman, Co-Founder Zero Waste Capital District
Logan Welde, Staff Attorney, Clean Air Council
Chris Rilling, Executive Director, Puget Soundkeeper Alliance
Aditi Varshneya, US/Canada Zero Waste Communities Coordinator, GAIA
Shari Rueckl, Chair, Brooklyn Solid Waste Advisory Board
Adrienne Esposito, Executive Director, Citizens Campaign for the Environment
Doug O'Malley, Director, Environment New Jersey
Matthew Civello, Chair, Manhattan Solid Waste Advisory Board
Matt Malina, Director & Founder, NYC H2O
Lindsay Preftakes, President, Environmental Coalition of the Pelhams
Jonathan Westin, Executive Director, New York Communities for Change (NYCC)
Denise Patel, US Program Director, GAIA
Nada Khader, Executive Director, WESPAC Foundation
Chris Murawski, Director of Community Engagement, Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper
Greg Todd, President, Waste Not Permaculture
Baani Behniwal, Policy Analyst, Californians Against Waste
Alexandra Kahn, Founder, Kahana Foundation
Sarah Gallagher, President, Upper Green Side
Julie Noblitt, Strategic Advisor, Heirs To Our Oceans
Jan Dell, Independent Engineer, The Last Beach Cleanup
David Krantz, President, Aytzim: Ecological Judaism
Diane Wilson, Executive Director, San Antonio Bay Estuarine Waterkeeper
Jonathan Westin, Executive Director, New York Communities for Change
Sarah Martik, Campaign Director, Center for Coalfield Justice
Joanie Steinhaus, Program Director, Turtle Island Restoration Network
Debby Lee Cohen, Executive Director and Founder, Cafeteria Culture
Dee Durhan, Executive Director, Plastic Free Delaware/Zero Waste First State
Jessica Craven, Steering Committee Co-Chair, Feminists in Action Los Angeles
Sarah Doll, Director, Safer States
Diane Wilson, Executive Director, San Antonio Bay Estuarine Waterkeeper
Deborah Rudnick, Chair, Bainbridge Island Watershed Council
Sherrie Pasarell, AmPark Eco Core
Emily Kichler, Organizer, DSA Zero Waste NYC
Jill Bauer, Gardener, Green Park Gardeners NYC
Maria-Celeste Delgado-Librero, Founder, Sustainable Roanoke
Ellen Silver, Chairperson, Village of Mamaroneck Committee for the Environment
Mari Mennel-Bell, Director, JazzSLAM
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Kate Kurera, Deputy Director, EANY
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Emy Kane, Senior Director of Digital & Communications, Lonely Whale
Jeffrey M. Twine, President, Upper West Side Recycling
Veronique Pittman, Board of Directors, Green Schools Alliance
Jackie Nuñez, Founder, The Last Plastic Straw

Virginia Little, Founder Harlem Zero Waste Initiative

Martha Myrick Rogers, St. Andrew's Earth Care Committee

Jenny Kedward, President, ReUSE Minnesota

Goffinet McLaren, Co Founder, Chirping Birds Society

Sue Chiang, Pollution Prevention, Director Center for Environmental Health

Mike Schade, Campaign Director, Mind the Store

3 Beachapedia. Bioplastics Glossary. beachapedia.org/Bioplastic_Glossary
4 Surfrider Foundation Plastic is Plastic – Don’t be Fooled by Compostability Claims. December 2019 www.surfrider.org/coastal-blog/entry/plastic-is-plastic-dont-be-fooled-by-compostability-claims