

**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 food ware.

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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup>

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](mailto: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, Habitsofwaste.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

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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 Mifflin, 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

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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

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Deborah Rudnick, Chair, Bainbridge Island Watershed Council

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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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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

<sup>1</sup> *Science*. Jenna R. Jambeck et al. *Plastic waste inputs from land into the ocean*. February 2015. [jambeck.engr.uga.edu/landplasticinput](http://jambeck.engr.uga.edu/landplasticinput)

<sup>2</sup> *UN Environment*. *The State of Plastics*. 2018. [wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/25513/state\\_plastics\\_WED.pdf](http://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/25513/state_plastics_WED.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> *Beachapedia*. *Bioplastics Glossary*. [beachapedia.org/Bioplastic\\_Glossary](http://beachapedia.org/Bioplastic_Glossary)

<sup>4</sup> *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](http://www.surfrider.org/coastal-blog/entry/plastic-is-plastic-dont-be-fooled-by-compostability-claims)