



WHEREAS: There is a global plastic pollution crisis and Walmart distributes an estimated 18 billion to 20 billion single-use plastic carry out shopping bags per year, which contribute to plastic pollution. About one trillion single-use plastic bags are used annually across the globe, or 2 million every minute.

From 8 million to 12 million tons of plastics are carried into oceans annually. Plastic bags are among the most common items found in beach cleanups. These lightweight bags can easily become airborne on city streets or in landfills and migrate into waterways, where they cause harm. Plastics bags degrade in water to small particles that animals mistake for food. Plastic pollution affects 260 species, causing fatalities from ingestion, entanglement, suffocation, and drowning. Sea turtles mistake plastic bags for jellyfish. An estimated 100,000 marine animals are killed annually by plastic bags. They have also been found in the stomachs of many land animals including elephants, tigers, zebras, cows, and camels, according to National Geographic.

By 2050 there could be more plastic than fish, according to the Ellen MacArthur Foundation. Former UN Undersecretary-General Erik Solheim called the issue “an ocean Armageddon.” The environmental cost of consumer plastic products and packaging exceeds \$139 billion annually, according to the American Chemistry Council.

More than 470 U.S. municipalities in 28 states now ban or charge fees for single-use plastic carry out bags. California, Connecticut, Delaware, Oregon, Hawaii, Maine, New York, and Vermont and more than 50 countries have taken action to ban or restrict plastic bags. U.S. plastic bag recycling rates are estimated at less than 5%. Plastic bags collected curbside often clog municipal recycling machinery.

The company has goals for its private brand packaging to be 100% recyclable, reusable, or compostable by 2025, but no apparent policies or plans to phase out single-use shopping bags. The company states that reducing unnecessary plastic waste is a key priority. It has taken actions to reduce bag waste and promote reusable bags, but has not disclosed efforts to phase out distribution of single-use plastic bags.

Our company lags competitors on this issue. Kroger Co. has agreed to phase out single-use plastic bags by 2025. Other competitors including Costco, Trader Joe’s, and Whole Foods Market have previously stopped using single-use plastic bags.

Further, Walmart has not disclosed current plastic bag usage; Kroger has stated it distributes 6 billion bags annually, and that its phase out action will reduce landfill waste by 123 million pounds.



BE IT RESOLVED: Shareowners of Walmart request that the board of directors issue a report, at reasonable cost, omitting confidential information, assessing the environmental impacts of continuing to use single-use plastic shopping bags.

SUPPORTING STATEMENT: Proponents believe that the report should include an assessment of the reputational, financial, and operational risks associated with continuing to single-use plastic bags and, if possible, goals and a timeline to phase them out.