

# PLASTIC IS ESSENTIAL TO U.S. MANUFACTURING RESILIENCE



## “Break Free” Act Would Disrupt Critical Supply Chains, Nation’s Response to Crises

The Break Free From Plastic Pollution Act risks causing devastating supply chain disruptions because it restricts the production of a material that is essential to nearly all U.S. manufacturing: plastic. Public policy should ensure that plastic can continue to play its critical role in our nation’s manufacturing supply chain.

### Supply Chain Security Is a National Priority

In his Executive Orders to strengthen U.S. resilience, President Biden declared: “The United States needs resilient, diverse, and secure supply chains to ensure our economic prosperity and national security. Pandemics and other biological threats, cyber-attacks, climate shocks and extreme weather events, terrorist attacks, geopolitical and economic competition, and other conditions can reduce critical manufacturing capacity and the availability and integrity of critical goods, products, and services.”

He noted: “And remember, the shortages in PPE during this pandemic – that meant we didn’t have the masks; we didn’t have gowns or gloves to protect our frontline health workers. We heard horror stories of doctors and nurses wearing trash bags... And they were rewashing and reusing their masks over and over again in the OR... this will never happen again in the United States, period.”

To restore supply chains and rebuild American resilience, we must rely primarily on domestic production of essential materials... before we need them in a crisis.

### Plastic Is Essential to Our Nation’s Livelihood

Plastic is an irreplaceable part of our nation’s economy, contributing to nearly every vital segment of our manufacturing sector... and our lives. It’s essential to creating medical supplies, comfortable housing, personal safety equipment, a safe food supply, clean energy, and our family cars. Making and distributing plastic where and when it’s needed is indispensable to our ability to go places, deliver food, run a business, make a phone call, and fight disease. Plastic makes our modern life possible.

That’s why the Break Free From Plastic Pollution Act is so troublesome. It restricts the manufacture of plastic in the U.S., which would disrupt our nation’s ability to deliver essential materials for essential needs.

### Plastic Plays an Essential Role in Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions

To combat climate change, multiple sectors of the U.S. economy must drive down greenhouse gas emissions: building/construction, vehicles, power generation, waste management, food production, consumer goods, and more.

All of these sectors and others rely on the plastic supply chain to help them reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Because plastic is strong yet lightweight, it allows us to do more with less material, resulting in less greenhouse gas emissions than alternatives.

However, the “Break Free” Act’s restrictions on plastic production would inhibit the ability of these sectors to meet climate goals. We need modern, advanced materials such as engineered polymers and polymer composites – aka plastic – to combat climate change. Restricting the manufacture and use of plastic will undermine our nation’s ability to meet its greenhouse gas emission reduction goals.

### Restricting Essential Materials Disrupts Our Nation’s Supply Chain

The COVID-19 pandemic laid bare the need for critical supplies to reach manufacturers and everyday people where needed... and on time.

For example, companies that make personal protective equipment (PPE) – medical gowns, face shields, N95 masks – sometimes ran short of materials to make these life-saving products. The supply chain was disrupted by a virus. In response, plastic makers shifted production lines, worked

longer hours, and sometimes lived inside their facilities 24/7 to deliver the materials needed to fight the pandemic. They faced shortages, sick spouses, and quarantines.

What they didn't face was government restrictions on their ability to deliver these essential materials... restrictions that would further disrupt supply chains, restrictions like the ones in the "Break Free" legislation.

## Our Pandemic Response Is Enabled by Plastic

Right now, our nation is delivering vaccines to our vulnerable citizens. The vaccine is delivered in a plastic syringe – that's hundreds of millions of essential, lifesaving medicine dispensing products made possible by plastic. Many of these syringes are transported across our nation in foam plastic storage containers to keep them cold. The people injecting and receiving the vaccine are wearing masks made with plastic fibers to help prevent transmission of the virus.

Do we really want government mandates limiting when our manufacturing sector can and cannot make essential supplies? Materials needed to build a car, protect our food, or fight a pandemic? Our "just-in-time" economy relies on an uninterrupted supply chain of essential materials and services that would be disrupted by the production "pause" prescribed in bill.

## We Don't Need Government Mandated Disruptions

This winter, in Texas and other southern states, severe weather shut down manufacturing facilities, including multiple facilities that make plastic. Residents were endangered, and facilities and employees idled. It's unclear when all of these facilities will return to full capacity. Similar weather-related disruptions are expected in the future.

Supplies of essential materials such as polypropylene – a plastic used to make car parts, medical equipment and food packaging – have been disrupted. While this interruption has been difficult, supply chains are adjusting to these disruptions. The materials needed to make airbags and life-saving PPE can be found outside the stricken region. For now...

What's unclear is how supply chains could adjust to government mandated restrictions on the manufacture of these essential supplies. Do we really need to add another layer of disruption on top of an already stressed supply chain?

*Congress should reject the Break Free From Plastic Pollution Act to prevent it from disrupting our nation's ability to respond to crises and to ensure that plastic can continue to play its critical role in our nation's manufacturing supply chain.*

