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Ms. Sanders

ENC-3416

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An open letter to the Publix executive team

Everyone loves competition. It drives us to our limits just so we can prove that not only do we deserve to be here, but that we are excelling exactly where we are. The United States of America is a very patriotic country, one that loves to prove how superior we are. We have competitions like the Olympics just to channel all of this competitive nature towards. We also have statistics published in papers and articles that are constantly comparing the US to other countries. America likes to come out on top in whatever way we can.

Here are some statistics about Publix that I know you are aware of, because I got them off of the Publix website:

- Named as one of *Fortune's* World's Most Admired Companies (1994 – 2021)
- Ranked No. 2 among the Top Companies for Social Responsibility by Harris Poll (2017)
- Listed among the country's favorite supermarkets by Market Force Information Grocery Benchmark Study (2014 – 2018)
- Received the GreenChill Achievement Award from the Environmental Protection Agency (2014)

On the following page are more statistics that I think vital for everyone to be aware of.

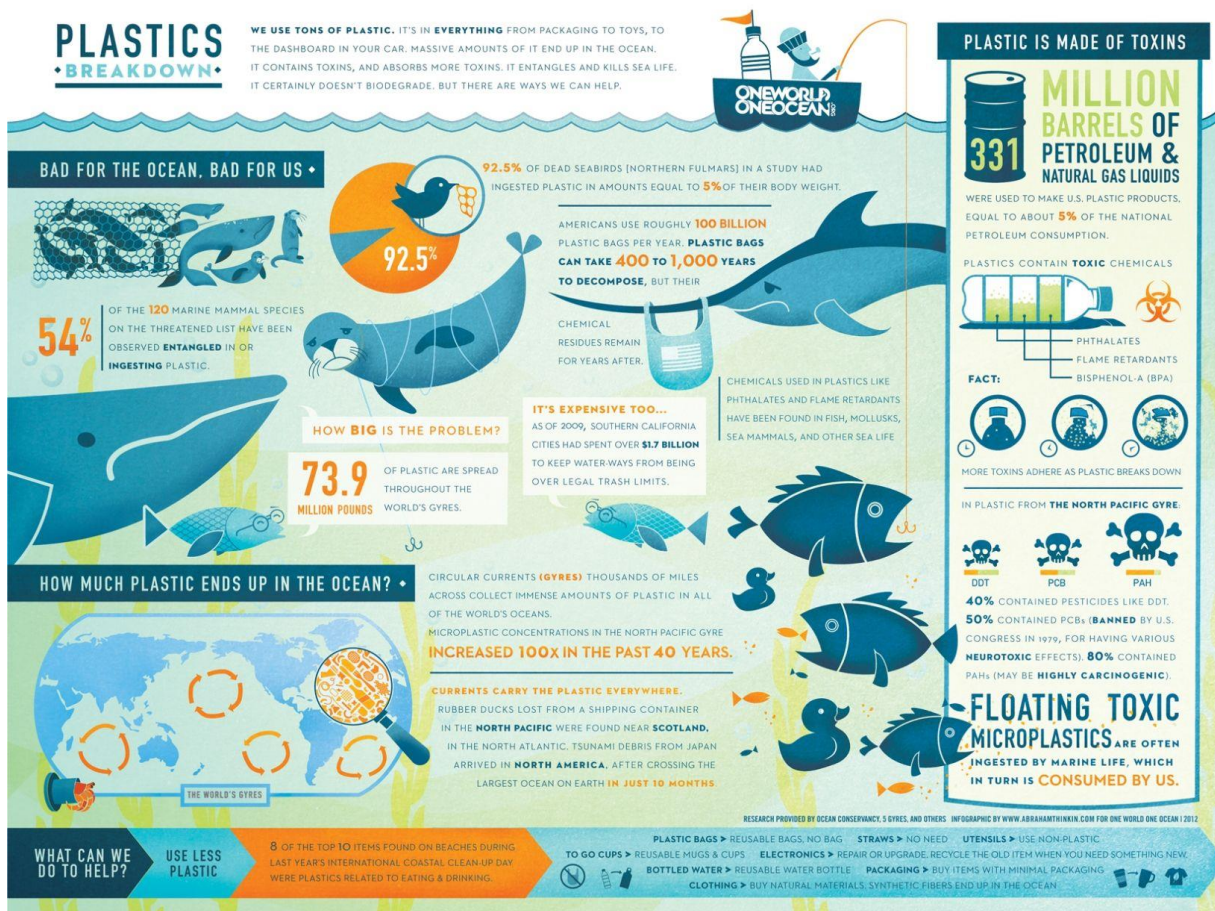


Figure 1 – plastic damages across the US and the world; One World One Ocean, 2020

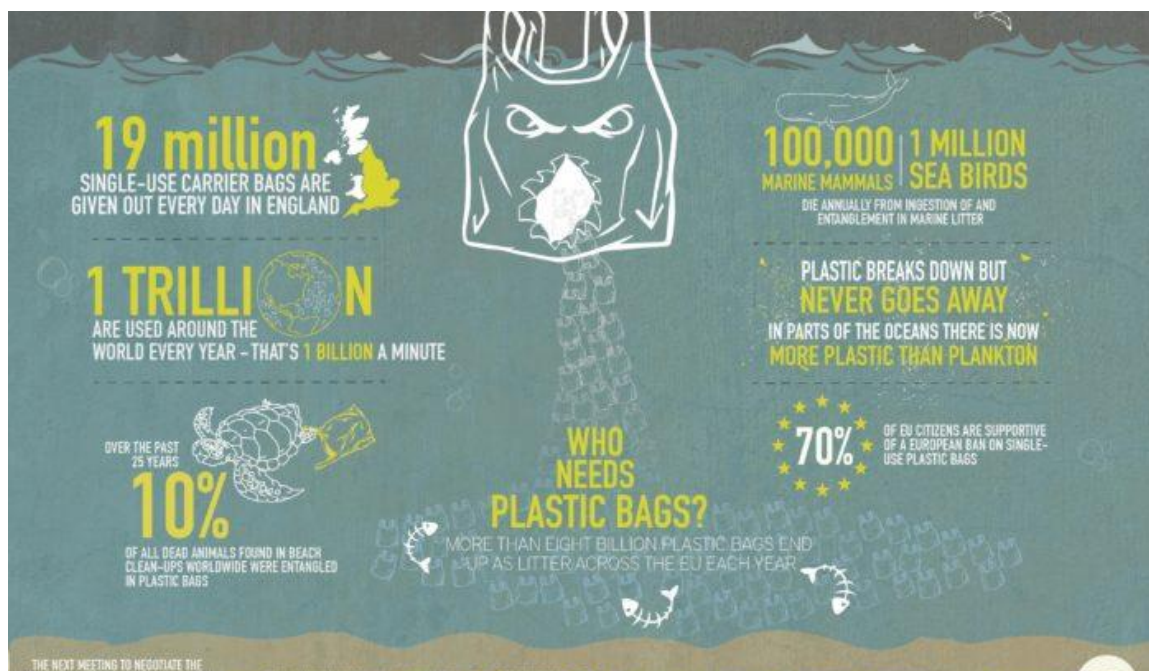


Figure 2 – plastic usage and damages in England; Sarah Baulch, 2015

My name is Annabelle Argeles, and I am a college student attending Florida State University. As a college student living off-campus, I buy a lot of groceries; as a college student, I like buying *cheap* groceries, and Publix is one of my favorite places to shop. Conveniently enough for me, I live right next to both a Publix and an Aldis, so naturally those are the only grocery stores I shop at. It is easy to compare the two together. Publix is enormous: lots of variety in food, fresh food and baked goods, easy to navigate and has lots of sales. Aldis is practical: keeps food in their shipping containers, has lots of off-brand supplies, minimal selection, self-bagging area and they do not provide free bags for customers. Now it is this last point that I want to discuss further.

I grew up in a household that would bring their own bags to the grocery store. My mom kept big bags, thin bags, “freezy” bags and even plastic bags all in the pantry ready for our next grocery run. I lived in both Italy and Japan for various amounts of time. Since 2020, Japan has issued a nationwide ban on free plastic bags in grocery stores to help discourage the use of plastics (Coto Academy). Italy has implemented similar methods in their stores as well. I would be sure to bring my own bags, so I did not have to pay for any when I got there (plus, it helped me look less like a foreigner). I continue to use reusable bags when shopping today, even if it’s not necessary.

I am writing to you to suggest you implement a similar policy of charging for bags throughout your 1000+ stores. Publix is arguably the biggest grocery store in the state of Florida. Millions of people shop at the various stores every day and it has become an extremely successful corporation since its foundation. Imagine how vast a difference you could make with this simple switch from complimentary bags to charged bags.

If you look at *figure 2* (Baulch) above, you will see how England is contributing to global plastic waste. England - which is a much smaller country than the US - distributes 19 million single use plastic bags a day. These plastic bags can take from 400 up to 1,000+ years to decompose, and even when they do, their chemical properties can remain. In *figure 1* (One World One Ocean) above, the information states that Americans use roughly 100 billion plastic bags a year. This means that Americans use roughly 274 million bags a day, making England’s 19 million seem much smaller. You might be thinking, well, the US is a much bigger country, and the data was taken 5 years apart, so how telling is this data really? This is all true, so I did some calculations

of my own. According to the *United States Census Bureau*, in September of 2020, the population of the US was roughly 332 million people. Additionally, according to the *UK Office for National Statistics*, in 2014, the population of the UK was roughly 65 million people. I then divided the number of plastic bags used a day in each respective country by the population at the time the statistic was taken to calculate approximately how many plastic bags are used per person each day. ($274/332=.83$; $19/65=.30$). In the UK every person uses roughly 30% of a single plastic bag a day whereas in the US, every person uses roughly 83% of a plastic bag a day. Even though the US has a greater population, this does not excuse the exceedingly high number of plastic bags used either annually or daily: Americans are using too many plastic bags unnecessarily.

One of the main victims of our plastic waste are animals, but marine animals are at the forefront. Across the world, countries have started to make small changes to decrease their plastic usage, like using paper instead of plastic straws (help save the sea turtles). Other countries have switched to a reusable bag encouraged shopping method. Materials are made with more recyclable products because it has been proven time and time again just how harmful plastic is in the environment. Looking back to *figure 2* again, you can see how damaging plastic bags are to sea creatures. 100,000 sea mammals and 1 million sea birds die annually from plastic ingestion and/or entanglement. There is no animal – marine, terrestrial, aerial, etc. – that has digestive systems to accommodate plastic. It is also not aesthetically pleasing to see plastic bags flying around like toxic tumbleweed or the dead animals washed up on the beaches suffocating in plastic bags.



Figure 3 - How plastic bags damage the environment;
Maggie Stout, 2020

Think about how much plastic we contribute to this global concern, but even further, think about how much of a difference *you* could make by implementing this simple switch. Charging a mere 10 cents for each grocery bag will have almost immediate consequences to how your customer's shop. This switch will be both beneficial to you (Publix) and to the environment. While I will suggest donating the increased revenue to a global

restoration corporation of your choosing, I cannot expect this to actually happen. There will also be the added bonus of claiming a more environmentally friendly shopping experience. Rather than just suggest the use of reusable bags, charging for them will (more or less) force people to start bringing their own bags. People will get annoyed having to constantly pay extra to bag their groceries that they will start to remember to bring bags from home and therefore decrease the amount of plastic going to landfills/oceans.

Publix has claimed to be taking steps towards a more environmentally friendly shopping experience, but what better way to emphasize the use of reusable bags than to put a price on the plastic bags? Publix's profits would increase, there would be fewer plastic bags entering the ecosystem, and shoppers would very likely appreciate this step towards Publix being a more environmentally conscience corporation (I know I would be). Publix should enter into the competition that is climate change and prove that they have always been at the top, and by charging for plastic bags, you would be.

A hopeful college student,
Annabelle Argeles

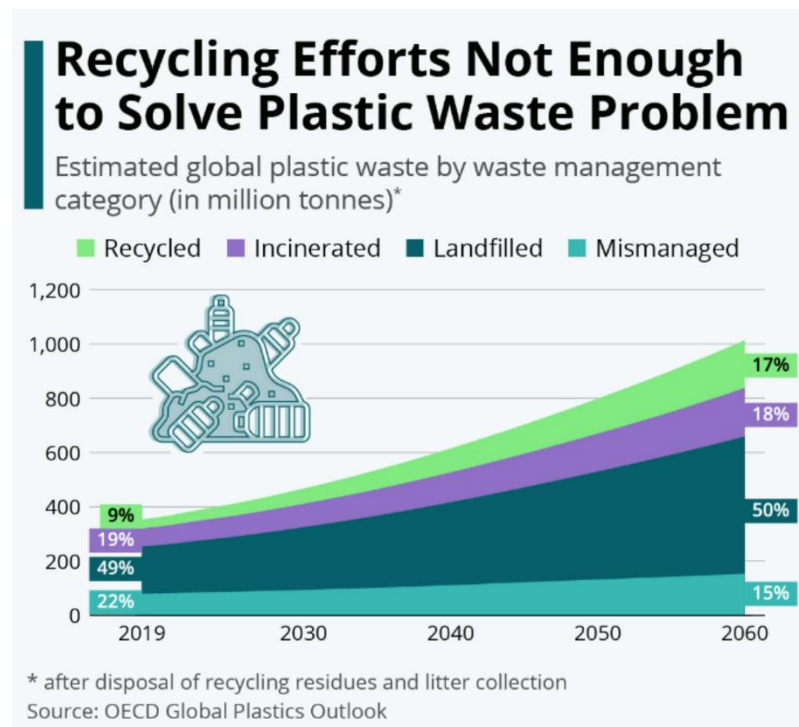


Figure 4 - Plastic Waste Final Locations; Ana Fleck, 2022

Rationale

When trying to come up with social justice issues, I had a difficult time figuring out even what range of topics I wanted to write about. I knew if I chose something in the political sense, I would get bored and procrastinate writing the letter. The entertainment industry has their current problem with the writer's strike (which I was seriously considering), but I did not know much about that topic and was unsure how I was going to research every aspect involved. I finally chose an environmental issue because I have grown up in a family that has always been very conscious about their ecological footprint. The biggest thing we make sure to constantly do is bring our own bags when going grocery shopping. I have been using my own reusable bags when shopping for more than just groceries and have been for many years now. I have gone grocery shopping many times since the semester began, so it was something I had fresh in my brain. I prefer shopping at stores that implement a reusable bag policy (like Aldis and Trader Joes), but I love shopping at Publix because of their massive selection. I decided to write to the executive team at Publix to suggest implementing a charged bag policy throughout their many stores across the US, making Publix my primary audience and anyone who shops at Publix my secondary audience. The secondary audience could be extended to anyone who grocery shops in areas where there are Publix's if they were to read it in a public medium.

I would submit this open letter to a couple different mediums including major publications like New York Times, the EPA, the ENN, the Guardian etc. and minor publications specific to the state of Florida like the Miami Herald, the Orlando Sentinel, and the Sun Sentinel. I would also post it on my own social media accounts, with a plethora of hashtags like #savetheenvironment, #reusablebags, #publix, etc. to help the letter reach my intended audience (people who grocery shop in the state of florida). The more places I submit it to, the more likely for it to reach a wider audience.

The visuals incorporated in my letter really help to further the reader's understanding of plastic usage across the world and its horrible implications. Readers will believe me more if they see the statistics (logos) for themselves as opposed to just taking my word for it (ethos). It also helped to break up the text so that the letter was easier to get through, and gave the reader colorful visuals to receive important information from. The information about how the animals are being affected

was emphasizes through the images of sad animals, which would appeal to one's emotions (pathos).

Overall, I wrote this open letter because climate change is a huge problem that will have major implications for the future generations, my generation. I wanted my proposal to be both reasonable and beneficial to implement, so that the executive team would genuinely consider my open letter. Publix would get more money, less plastic would be entering the environment, less animals will die: everyone involved wins. I want to have a future where the earth is not dying, and one way I could help make this happen would be to write to major corporations, like Publix, to convince them to enforce environmentally friendly methods that everyone will like.

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