**A** **JOINT RESOLUTION**

TO DIRECT THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH INTO MICROPLASTIC CONTAMINATION.

Whereas, microplastics pose an emerging threat to the environment and public health, given their significant impact on water, air, and soil quality; and

Whereas, in marine ecosystems, countless seabirds, turtles, and marine mammals, including, but not limited to, whales and dolphins, have died from plastic ingestion or entanglement; and

Whereas, without action, projections estimate that by 2050 the mass of plastic pollution in the ocean will exceed the mass of fish. One study found plastics in the gut of every single sea turtle examined and in ninety percent of seabirds; and

Whereas, evidence now shows that even our own food and drinking water sources are contaminated with plastic. Microplastics have been found in tap water, bottled water, table salt, and fish and shellfish; and

Whereas, the presence of microplastics in the soil could have further implications for soil health and farming; and

Whereas, exposure to these toxins has been linked to cancers, birth defects, impaired immunity, endocrine disruption, and other ailments; and

Whereas, the environmental and public health impacts of plastic pollution are devastating, and the environmental externalities and public costs of cleaning up and mitigating plastic pollution are already staggering and continue to grow. Now, therefore,

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. The Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Health and Environmental Control shall jointly conduct research into microplastic contamination in this State. Findings shall include, but are not limited to:

(1) the adoption of a standard methodology to be used in evaluating the extent of microplastic contamination in the environment, including in water, air, soil, and wildlife;

(2) an assessment of the extent of microplastic contamination in the environment, including the results of testing at least one surface water and one source of drinking water in each county of the State and at least four brands of bottled water sold in the State;

(3) a breakdown of the various sources of microplastics and the extent of their impact in this State;

(4) the identification of best practices for manufacturers and consumers to reduce the production and release of microplastics into the environment;

(5) an assessment of the efficacy of methods or mechanisms for removing microplastics from the environment;

(6) a recommendation, based on this assessment, of methods or mechanisms for removing microplastics from the environment; and

(7) any further recommendations for legislative or regulatory actions that the State can take to protect human health and the environment from microplastics.

(B) The Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Health and Environmental Control shall provide their findings to the General Assembly on or before December 31, 2021.

(C) Based on these findings, the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Health and Environmental Control shall by regulation adopt and implement a statewide microplastics strategy related to reducing microplastic contamination in this State.

SECTION 2. This joint resolution takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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