



WHEREAS: A portion of Kroger house brand product packaging is unrecyclable, including plastics, which are a growing component of plastic pollution and marine litter. Authorities say that marine litter kills and injures marine life, spreads toxics, and poses a potential threat to human health. The environmental cost of consumer plastic products and packaging exceeds \$139 billion annually, according to the American Chemistry Council.

Plastic is the fastest growing form of packaging; U.S. flexible plastic sales are estimated at \$26 billion. Dried fruit, frozen meat, cheese, and dog food are some of the Kroger house brand items packaged in unrecyclable plastic pouches. Private label items account for a quarter of all sales – nearly \$20 billion annually. Using unrecyclable packaging when recyclable alternatives are available wastes valuable resources. William McDonough, a leading green design advisor, calls pouch packaging a “monstrous hybrid” designed to end up either in a landfill or incinerator.

Recyclability of household packaging is a growing area of focus as consumers become more environmentally conscious, yet recycling rates stagnate. Only 14% of plastic packaging is recycled, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Billions of pouches and similar multi-layer plastic laminates, lie buried in landfills. Unrecyclable packaging is more likely to be littered and swept into waterways. An assessment of marine debris by the Global Environment Facility concluded that one cause of debris entering oceans is “design and marketing of products internationally without appropriate regard to their environmental fate or ability to be recycled...”

In the marine environment, plastics break down into indigestible particles that marine life mistake for food. Studies by the EPA suggest a synergistic effect between plastic debris and persistent, bio-accumulative, toxic chemicals. Plastics absorb toxics such as polychlorinated biphenyls and dioxins from water or sediment and transfer them to the marine food web and potentially to human diets. If no actions are taken, oceans are expected to contain more plastic than fish by 2050!

Making all packaging recyclable, if possible, is the first step needed to reduce the threat posed by plastic pollution. Better management of plastic could save consumer goods companies \$4 billion a year. Companies who aspire to corporate sustainability yet use these risky materials need to explain why they use unrecyclable packaging. Other companies who manufacture and sell food and household goods are moving towards recyclability. Walmart uses sustainable packaging guidelines to incentivize its suppliers to increase the amount of packaging they use that can be recycled. Colgate-Palmolive, PepsiCo, Procter & Gamble, Unilever, and Walmart have all developed packaging recyclability goals.

BE IT RESOLVED: Shareowners of Kroger request that the board of directors issue a report, at reasonable cost, omitting confidential information, assessing the environmental impacts of continuing to use unrecyclable brand packaging.

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