



February 26, 2024

The Honorable Jeff Merkley  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Chemical Safety,  
Waste Management, Environmental Justice, and  
Regulatory Oversight  
Committee on Environment and Public Works  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Markwayne Mullin  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Chemical Safety,  
Waste Management, Environmental Justice, and  
Regulatory Oversight  
Committee on Environment and Public Works  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Alex Padilla  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Fisheries, Water,  
and Wildlife  
Committee on Environment and Public Works  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Cynthia Lummis  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Fisheries, Water,  
and Wildlife  
Committee on Environment and Public Works  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Merkley, Chairman Padilla, Ranking Member Mullin, and Ranking Member Lummis:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement for the record of today’s hearing on “Understanding the Presence of Microplastics in Water.” We appreciate your subcommittees taking the time to highlight this issue.

The Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies (AMWA) represents the nation’s largest publicly owned drinking water systems, and our members pride themselves on delivering clean and safe drinking water to 160 million Americans. However, the growing prevalence of microplastics in water supplies presents additional challenges that drinking water systems must navigate on top of priorities such as addressing emerging contaminants like Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances, replacing lead service lines, and upgrading aging water infrastructure.

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Plastic use in daily life has exacerbated the ubiquity of microplastics in our source water, ground water, and wastewater. As microplastics (generally considered non-soluble, solid polymer particles of less than five millimeters in size) and nano plastics (solid polymer particles below 1 mm) break down in the environment, they can leach chemicals into water supplies. While more data is needed to quantify the prevalence, and the human health impacts, of exposure to microplastics, nano plastics, and their constituent chemicals via drinking water,<sup>1</sup> the public should not have to question whether their drinking water might include these plastic particles.

Fortunately, many drinking water treatment technologies can and do filter out many microplastics before they reach the consumer. Nevertheless, the existence of microplastic in source water supplies is a growing concern. As source water supplies become more contaminated with microplastic, it will thus add another burden to utilities to filter it out of drinking water.

AMWA has long supported addressing water pollution at its source, rather than allowing the burden to be passed downstream to water utilities for treatment. To avoid additional treatment expenses for drinking water ratepayers, and questions about water quality and public health implications at the tap, it is more efficient and cost-effective for both utilities and ratepayers alike to prevent microplastic pollution from entering the nation's waterways in the first place. Otherwise, additional treatment for microplastic could result in rising costs on local ratepayers, many of which cannot afford higher rates. Our members take great care in ensuring their water is safe for human consumption but should not have to contend with microplastics and nano plastics in addition to the various regulated contaminants for which drinking water must be monitored and treated.

AMWA encourages your subcommittees to explore avenues of mitigating the entry of microplastics into source water supplies, with an emphasis on source control strategies that avoid transferring removal costs to end-of-pipe wastewater reclamation facilities – which would also penalize public utilities and their ratepayers. We are eager to work with you on finding solutions. Thank you for your attention to this important issue, and we look forward to working with your subcommittees to protect the nation's source water supplies from microplastic.

Sincerely,



Thomas Dobbins  
Chief Executive Officer

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6449537/>