

Oral Testimony of Craig Cookson, Senior Director, Recycling & Energy Recovery, American Chemistry Council, to Wisconsin Assembly Committee on Environment and Forestry. Assembly Bill 789.

Good morning, Chairman Mursau and Members of the committee. My name is Craig Cookson, and I am the Senior Director of Recycling and Energy Recovery at the American Chemistry Council's Plastics Division. ACC is the national trade association representing the U.S. chemical industry, and its Plastics Division represents the leading U.S. manufacturers of plastics. I am here today to speak in support of AB 789. Thank you to Representative Tittl and all the members of the committee for sponsoring this bill.

This is an important and timely hearing. How the United States uses and reuses materials, and then manages those materials post-use is a critical issue for our environment and the citizens of Wisconsin, as well as for makers and users of plastics. There are fundamental changes occurring in how we optimize our natural resources, use materials more efficiently and productively over their life cycles and how we obtain, use and conserve energy in this country. Given the importance of raw materials and energy to the US economy – especially to manufacturing here in Wisconsin – we must embrace the development of new

technologies that can produce chemical and plastic feedstocks, fuels and alternative energy from a variety of sources, including non-recycled plastics.

Today, I am pleased to be here to discuss how Assembly Bill 789 can help accelerate the development of a more sustainable approach to materials management here in Wisconsin, while simultaneously creating jobs and realizing important environmental benefits.

Wisconsin currently recycles about 26,000 tons of plastics each year. Through our work with the Association of Plastic Recyclers and other industry-led groups, ACC is working to further increase the recycling of many types of plastics, including as a long-time funder of The Recycling Partnership, a national non-profit dedicated to improving recycling. In 2016, The Recycling Partnership provided a grant to Outagamie County to help it provide nearly 7,000 large recycling carts to households across 13 local communities. And, ACC appreciates the strong partnership with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to implement a state-led program to recycle more valuable consumer plastic bags, wraps and other film packaging. We thank Wisconsin for your leadership as the first state partner for the WRAP Recycling Action Program. Although we are committed to helping develop strong, sustainable plastic recycling programs, it is also true that

not all plastics can be economically recycled under current commercial and technological conditions. However, instead of burying these valuable plastic resources in a landfill, they should be recovered for their valuable energy content.

The inherent energy in plastics, is significant – plastics can contain as much energy or more than coal. That's why enacting AB 789 is critical. Technologies such as pyrolysis and gasification have established records of use and performance. These high-tech thermal conversion technologies are being used to turn plastics (and other materials) into transportation fuels such as ethanol, diesel and gasoline, waxes, lubricants and even new chemical feedstocks for manufacturing.

Unfortunately, many outdated waste and recycling laws (including the laws here in Wisconsin) are inhibiting growth of these technologies because they are incorrectly characterized as "waste disposal." Instead, these facilities should be properly characterized as "manufacturing" because these facilities are not in the business of disposing or destroying their inbound feedstock, but rather these facilities are in the business of converting that feedstock into higher value commodity fuels, products or chemicals. The State's mischaracterization of these technologies as "waste disposal" and their inbound feedstocks as "waste" will

lead to economic development in neighboring states and postpone Wisconsin's ability to more productively manage valuable materials after use.

As I conclude, let me leave you with a few numbers to consider. Remember, I said that Wisconsin currently recycles about 26,000 tons of plastics each year? While the state is making progress, unfortunately, it's estimated that 550,000 tons of plastics are being landfilled each year. This is a waste of a valuable resource for recycling and conversion. The Earth Engineering Center at Columbia University has calculated that if Wisconsin hypothetically converted all of its landfill bound plastics to transportation fuel via pyrolysis, those plastics could produce enough fuel to power 151,600 cars for a year. Beyond keeping these plastics out of landfills and thus preserving open green space, there are additional environmental benefits. Last year, the U.S. Department of Energy's Argonne National Laboratory published a peer-reviewed article in the scientific journal *Fuel*. "Fuel." Argonne found that using ultra low sulfur diesel derived from post-use, non-recycled plastics reduced greenhouse gas emissions by up to 14%, water consumption up to 58% and fossil energy use up to a whopping 96%, compared to ultra-low sulfur diesel produced from traditional crude oil. Finally, ACC has conservatively estimated that converting the non-recycled plastics found in

Wisconsin and Northern Illinois could support up to 17 facilities in Wisconsin. ACC estimated this could generate \$163 million in economic output each year in Wisconsin.

So thank you for the opportunity to testify today. The American Chemistry Council is pleased to support this sensible update to Wisconsin state law. AB 789 will enable Wisconsin to provide a fair regulatory environment for these technologies to establish themselves, thrive and capture the economic and environmental benefits of converting these non-recycled materials into fuels, chemicals and other valuable products. I look forward to working with this committee and responding to any questions. Thank you.