Statement from Linda Escalante, Caryl Hart, PhD, and Michael J. Sangiacomo
Petitioners for the California Recycling and Plastics Pollution Reduction Act Initiative

In December of 2019, we three individuals partnered with like-minded organizations who both
cared deeply about the environmental devastation caused by single-use plastics and had seen
the state legislature repeatedly fail to pass a comprehensive set of reforms to meaningfully
address this crisis. Collectively we drafted a people’s initiative to advance the reforms needed
and worked to qualify a measure for this November’s ballot.

With the ballot measure looming over plastic producers, industry lobbyists finally came to the
table with environmental advocates and legislators to craft a policy that would set recycling
performance standards and source reduction requirements for single-use plastic packaging
and food ware, require plastics producers to fund recycling infrastructure, and fund pollution
mitigation and conservation efforts. This legislation, SB 54, appears to be headed for Governor
Newsom’s desk if we three proponents withdraw the people’s initiative.

While some have made claims that SB 54 is the strongest plastics pollution policy ever to be
enacted in the United States, we are less interested in hyperbole and more focused on how
the policy will be implemented and enforced. Already, the signs of what comes next are
troubling. Today, the American Chemistry Council (ACC), the plastics industry lobbying
organization, released a statement that they intend, either through legislation or litigation, to
undo commitments around source reduction and advance chemical recycling operations,
which disproportionately impact disadvantaged communities. It is clear from today’s ACC
statement, that the hope and promise around SB 54 may quickly dissolve into what we have
experienced from the plastics industry in the past: deception, blame, and false promises.

Nonetheless, we three petitioners will leave the final decision of the ballot measure up to the
State Assembly and Senate. If our elected representatives believe that we can achieve the
laudable reforms in SB54 and defend its provisions against industry tactics aimed at
maintaining the status quo, we will withdraw the measure once it is signed by Governor
Newsom.

However, if the California State Legislature is not convinced that we can implement these
plastic pollution reduction reforms, disadvantaged community protections, and conservation
programs and they do not pass SB 54, we are ready to take the issue to the voters in
November.

Linda Escalante  Caryl Hart, PhD       Michael J. Sangiacomo