Association of Pacific Island Legislatures

American Samoa
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
FSM, State of Chuuk
FSM, State of Kosrae
FSM, State of Pohnpei
FSM, State of Yap
Island of Guam
Republic of Kiribati
Republic of the Marshall Islands
Republic of Nauru
Republic of Palau
State of Hawaii

A RESOLUTION

Resolution No. 38-GA-09

"Relative to safeguarding the health of our people, our coral reefs, and our tourism economies by encouraging Member Jurisdictions to ban sunscreens containing chemicals that are considered 'non-reef safe' in their jurisdictions and promoting the use of reef-friendly sunscreens and other methods of UV protection."

WHEREAS, many of our people and visitors regularly use sunscreen to protect themselves against harmful ultraviolet rays from the sun in activities such as going to the beach, hiking, gardening, and other everyday activities; and

WHEREAS, active ingredients in sunscreens have one of two functions: mineral or chemical ultraviolet filters. These filters use different mechanisms for protecting the skin, and the most common sunscreens contain chemical filters that typically include a combination of two to six of the following active ingredients: oxybenzone, avobenzone, octisalate, octocrylene, homosalate, and octinoxate; and

WHEREAS, according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in 84 FR 6204 (February 26, 2019), "available literature includes studies indicating that oxybenzone is absorbed through the skin and can lead to significant systemic exposure, as well as data showing the presence of oxybenzone in human breast milk, amniotic fluid, urine, and blood plasma"; and

WHEREAS, according to the FDA in 84 FR 6204 (February 26, 2019), "the significant systemic availability of oxybenzone…is a concern, among other reasons, because of questions raised in the published literature regarding the potential for endocrine activity with systemic oxybenzone exposure" and "available literature also raises questions about the safety of use of oxybenzone-containing sunscreens in young children because of the potential for higher absorption and bioaccumulation of oxybenzone in this population"; and

WHEREAS, in addition to concerns of causing human harm, oxybenzone has been found in laboratories to promote coral bleaching (Danovaro et al., 2008; Downs et al., 2015) and viral infections (Danovaro et al., 2008). Further, in laboratories, oxybenzone was also found to promote coral DNA damage, larval deformities, and decreased reproductive success, and coral exposed to oxybenzone at higher temperatures exhibited faster rates of bleaching (Downs et al., 2015); and

WHEREAS, although there are questions about whether banning non-reef safe chemicals in sunscreens is necessary or, conversely, if it will do enough to save our reefs, if we as government leaders do not act with caution while concerns are being raised about the safety of particular chemicals within sunscreens, and our reefs are damaged, the impacts to our communities will be many and of substantial scale. Our marine resources that have sustained our people for centuries if not millennia, have the potential to be negatively affected. These negative effects would likely deeply challenge our levels of food security and create further dependence by our people on costly imported foodstuffs when our island household economies are already severely constrained. These conditions would also challenge traditional diets and customary exchanges and other observances related to marine resources. Further, damage to our reefs and the cascading negative impacts to the ecological integrity of our reef systems, has the potential to adversely impact their ability to protect our islands from storm surges as well as negatively impact our tourism economies, as tourists often visit our islands specifically to observe our rich marine life; and

WHEREAS, at least five jurisdictions have already banned unsafe sunscreens, including Palau, Hawai‘i, U.S. Virgin Islands, Bonaire, and Key West, Florida. These jurisdictions have led the way in being the first places in the world to ban such sunscreens considered non-reef safe; and

WHEREAS, if we do not ban sunscreens containing chemicals deemed to be non-reef safe, our island communities will become the dumping grounds of the non-reef safe sunscreens that proactive and protective communities have banned, further compounding the potential toxins within our island communities and ecosystems and their adverse impacts for years to come; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED that by the Association of Pacific Island Legislatures, 38th General Assembly, Majuro, Republic of the Marshall Islands, July 23-26, 2019, that it hereby urges its Member Jurisdictions to encourage the use of reef-friendly sunscreens and other methods of UV protection such as using protective clothing for sun protection to reduce the need for sunscreen–rash guards, hats, long sleeve shirts, and leggings–and ban the use of sunscreens containing 'non-reef safe' chemicals within their jurisdictions; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that APIL President shall certify and the APIL Secretary shall attest to the adoption hereof and that copies of the same shall be transmitted to the Chief Executives and the Presiding Legislative Officers of the Member Jurisdictions of the Association of the Pacific Island Legislatures.

DULY AND REGULARLY ADOPTED ON THE 26TH DAY OF JULY, 2019.

NELSON STEPHEN
ACTING PRESIDENT

IVAN A. BLANCO
SECRETARY