

## Microfiber Filtration: California AB 1628

*Prepared by 2024 New York Sea Grant Law and Policy Fellow*

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### What is Microfiber Pollution?

Clothing and other textiles shed tiny pieces of fiber, called microfibers or fiber fragments. Microfibers from synthetics like polyester are one of the biggest sources of microplastic pollution in our environments.



### Microfiber Pollution: Sources and Sinks<sup>1</sup>

Fibers break off textiles like clothing, bedding, and carpets and nonwovens like wet wipes, diapers, and cigarette filters.

Microfibers are found in waterways like oceans and freshwater; air and dust; soil, food, and drinking water; and in fish, invertebrates, birds, and mammals, including humans.



### AB 1628

This was a proposed California bill requiring all new residential and state washing machines to include microfiber filters to reduce microfiber pollution in wastewater starting in 2029. The bill was vetoed in October 2023.

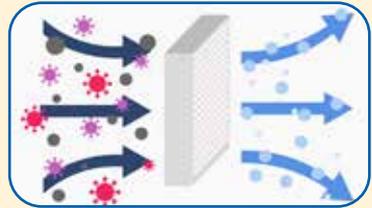


## Key Facts:

- Introduced in February 2023.
- Vetoed in October 2023 due to concerns about increased consumer cost, public policy rationale, and requirement details.
- Co-sponsored by the Nature Conservancy, Ocean Conservancy, and 5 Gyres.
- Eighth attempt to pass an Assembly Bill concerning microfiber pollution in California.
- Amended six times (twice in the Assembly, four times in the Senate).
- Based on California's Statewide Microplastics Strategy.

## Global Microfiber Legislation:

In 2020, France enacted a law requiring all new washing machines sold from January 1, 2025 to have mesh filters to capture microfibers. This applies to both household and commercial machines. France is the first country to have a microfiber filtration law for washing machines.



## Committee Concerns:

Enforcement strategy

Differences in commercial versus residential filters

Public awareness

Burden of civil penalties

Consumer role

Fiscal effects to the state





## Arguments of Support:

- Current microfiber pollution in California
- Filters offer an affordable and effective short-term solution.
- Adheres to California's Ocean Protection Council's Statewide Microplastics strategy.
- France has already implemented similar legislation.
- Microfiber filters are already being used in washing machines



## Arguments of Opposition:

- Filters can clog, potentially leading to flooding and less effective capture.
- Filters cannot capture very fine particles.
- Increased energy and water use.
- Maintenance of in-line filters.
- Plastic use to create filters.
- Limitations on technology and innovation.
- Microfiber pollution comes from sources other than laundering.
- Current lack of standardized tests for filtration performance.
- Other solutions might be more effective.
- Lack of regulation.
- Differences in commercial use.
- Potential for filters in building infrastructure.

## Amendment Timeline:

- March 22, 2023: Set filter size to 100 micrometers and applied the bill only to new washing machines.
- June 28, 2023: Added instruction label, civil penalties, and washing machine definition.
- July 13, 2023: Added certificate of compliance and removed civil penalties.
- September 6, 2023: Removed certificate of compliance, commercial use, and civil penalties. Added required report to the California State Water Resources Control Board.
- September 8, 2023: Removed the required report. October 8, 2023: The bill was vetoed.

## For Additional Information

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## Sources

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