

May 14, 2018

The Honorable. Andrew M. Cuomo  
Governor  
State of New York  
Executive Chamber  
New York State Capitol  
Albany, NY 12224

RE: Plastic Bag Pollution

Dear Governor Cuomo:

We, the undersigned, strongly support New York State enacting a comprehensive policy to curb the use of single-use bags this legislative session.

As you are aware, our organizations have worked with municipalities throughout New York to successfully enact policies that reduce disposable bag use and encourage consumers to switch to reusable alternatives. We applaud your commitment to address plastic bag pollution on a state-wide level and we want to work with your office to enact an effective, comprehensive program this year. In February of 2017, you met with several environmental groups to discuss the state preempting New York City's carryout bag reduction law. We discussed the importance of reducing plastic pollution that ultimately should be accomplished on a state-wide level. We were heartened to hear you assert your commitment to take a leadership role over this issue.

However, we cannot support your legislation as it is currently written. Given our experience with Bring Your Own Bag (BYOBag) policies, a plastic bag ban only will have unintended adverse consequences and therefore, needs to be accompanied by a fee on other disposable bags. Additionally, we urge that any new law retain effective local laws unless the new law is equal to or stronger than existing local laws.

Taking into account lessons learned from residents, businesses, and municipalities around the state and country who have enacted Bring Your Own Bag policies, we are writing to urge you to advance a policy that bans single-use plastic bags and places a fee on all other bags (both paper and reusable bags). An effective state policy should be modeled after municipalities that have successfully addressed this issue. A ban/fee hybrid is the most successful model of BYOBag policy in the United States. Los Angeles County achieved a 94 percent reduction in single-use bags, including a 30 percent reduction in paper bag use, after implementing a ban on single-use plastic bags with a 10-cent fee on other bags, including paper. San Jose has similar legislation to Los Angeles and documented an 89 percent decrease of bags in storm drains, 60 percent fewer in creeks, and 59 percent fewer in streets. Based on these successful policies, the Town of New Castle became the first municipality in NY to enact a ban/fee hybrid, with a ban on single-use plastic bags and a 10-cent fee on paper which went into effect in January of 2017.

In contrast to these successful ordinances, Chicago simply banned plastic bags and did not place a fee on paper. As a consequence of this incomplete policy, many stores switched to slightly thicker plastic bags and labeled them as “reusable” resulting in an increase of waste and undermining efforts to curb single-use bag consumption. In 2016, Chicago chose to switch from a ban to a 7-cent fee on disposable bags. In New York, the City of Long Beach and Suffolk County placed a fee on all bags instead of implementing a plastic bag ban and both are experiencing a dramatic reduction in disposable bag use. Meanwhile, municipalities in Westchester and Long Island chose to ban plastic bags with no fee component on other disposable bags and these communities have failed to see lasting consumer behavior change.

It is critical that New York moves forward with a policy that addresses both plastic and other disposable bags using the most successful policies as models. We urge you to ban single-use plastic bags and place a fee on paper and reusable bags and we recommend that a portion of the fee collected is dedicated to state parks, environmental improvement projects and reducing potential impacts to low/moderate income communities.

Sincerely,

350Brooklyn	Coalition Against Pilgrim Pipelines	Empire State Consumer Project, Inc.
350NYC	Coalition to Protect New York	Environmental Advocates of New York
AAUW Kingston	Coalition to Save Hempstead Harbor	Fifth Avenue Committee
All Our Energy	Coastal Preservation Network	First Reformed Church
Alliance for the Great Lakes	Coastal Research and Education Society of Long Island	Firsthand Learning, Inc.
Amalgamated Ecogroup	Creations	Food & Water Watch
Bedford 2020 Coalition	Transformative Energy Task Force, Sisters of Charity of New York	Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement
Big Reuse	Croton Climate Initiative	Gas Free Seneca
Bronx Climate Justice North	Dancewave, Inc.	Grassroots Environmental Education
Cafeteria Culture	Dominican Sisters of Hope	Greater New York Labor Religion Coalition
Catskill Mountainkeeper	EcoPel - Environmental Coalition of the Pelhams	Green Education and Legal Fund
Church Women United in New York State	EldersClimateAction	Green Ossining
Citizens Campaign for the Environment		Green Sanctuary Committee, CCNY, UU
Citizens Committee for New York City		
Cleanup North Brooklyn		
ClientEarth US		

Green Schools Alliance  
Harlem Climate Caucus  
Healing and Protecting  
Our Land Together - A  
Call To Prayer  
Hudson River Sloop  
Clearwater  
Human Impacts Institute  
LES Ecology Center  
Manhattan Solid Waste  
Advisory Board  
Mass Green Network  
Metro NY Catholic  
Climate Movement  
National Parks  
Conservation  
Association  
Natural Resources  
Defense Council  
Neighbors Allied for  
Good Growth  
New Castle  
Sustainability Advisory  
Board  
New York League of  
Conservation Voters  
Newtown Creek  
Alliance  
North American  
Climate, Conservation  
and Environment  
North Shore Audubon  
Society  
NWF NYC Eco-Schools  
NY Buddhist Climate  
Action Network  
NY/NJ Baykeeper  
NYC Friends of  
Clearwater  
NYC H2O

NYPIRG  
Operation Splash  
Orange Residents  
Against Pilgrim  
Pipelines  
Parents Community  
Service Network  
PAUSE - People of  
Albany United for Safe  
Energy  
Plastic Pollution  
Coalition  
plasticbaglaws.org  
Plymouth Friends for  
Clean Water  
Protect Orange County  
Rainforest Relief  
Riverkeeper  
Religious Organizations  
Along the River  
Rockland Sierra Club  
Save The Great South  
Bay  
Scarsdale Forum  
Sustainability  
Committee  
Seneca Lake Guardian  
Serpentine Art and  
Nature Commons, Inc.  
Setauket Harbor Task  
Force  
Sierra Club Atlantic  
Chapter  
Sierra Club Niagara  
Group  
Sierra Club Niagara  
Group  
Sixth Street Community  
Center

Sludge Stoppers Task  
Force  
South Asian Fund for  
Education, Scholarship  
and Training  
SUNY New Paltz  
Environmental Task  
Force  
Surfrider Foundation,  
Central Long Island  
Chapter  
Surfrider Foundation,  
Eastern Long Island  
Surfrider Foundation,  
NYC Chapter  
Sustainability  
Collaborative  
Sustainable Saratoga  
Sustainable Warwick  
The Buffalo NY Ocean  
Coalition  
The FUND for Lake  
George  
The Heights Urban  
Empowerment, Inc.  
The Nature Conservancy  
in New York  
Tompkins County  
Environmental  
Management Council  
Unitarian Universalist  
Women's Association-  
Metro District  
United for Action  
Upper Green Side  
Waterkeeper Alliance  
WeHateToWaste.com  
WESPAC Foundation  
West 80s Neighborhood  
Association

Western NY  
Environmental Alliance  
White Plains  
Econeighbors  
Working Class Dutchess