

Governor Andrew Cuomo
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

December 7, 2017

RE: New York State Needs a Comprehensive Single-Use Bag Policy

Governor Cuomo,

We, the undersigned, strongly urge New York State to move forward with a comprehensive policy to curb the use of single-use bags **in the Fiscal Year 2019 Budget**. As you know, over a dozen municipalities around the state have passed local ordinances aimed at reducing plastic and paper bag use while others are currently considering legislation. However, plastic pollution is an issue that impacts the entire state. It would be beneficial to tackle this issue on the state level, rather than through piecemeal local laws, and the formation of the New York Plastic Bag Task Force was an encouraging first step. Using lessons learned from municipalities around the state and the country, **we urge New York State to move forward with a comprehensive policy aimed at limiting single-use bag use through addressing all bag types, including a fee component on paper bags, to encourage consumer behavior change and promote the switch to reusable bags.**

Every year, taxpayers across New York State foot the bill to send tens of billions of single-use bags to landfills. The burden of disposing of these bags, as well as cleaning up plastic bag litter from streets, beaches, and storm drains, rests on local municipalities – resulting in tens of millions of taxpayer dollars literally being thrown away. Many of the plastic bags we consume do not make it to landfills, but end up in our local waterways, where they kill wildlife and ultimately contribute to the growing problem of plastic pollution in our oceans. To save money, reduce litter in our parks and on our streets, and protect our water resources, municipalities have enacted bans and fees on single-use bags.

While simply banning thin plastic bags has been somewhat successful at the local level, we have concerns that this type of legislation would not encourage lasting consumer behavior change if enacted on state-wide scale. There are three types of bag laws, all of which have been enacted in New York: bans on thin plastic bags, fees on all carryout bags (plastic, paper, and reusable), and a hybrid, which bans single-use plastic bags and places on fee on all other bags. Many of the municipalities that banned thin plastic bags have seen retailers switching to thicker “reusable” plastic bag or paper bags and fewer consumers making the permanent switch to reusable bags, since a no-cost carry-out bag is still provided at check-out.

However, both fees on carryout bags and a ban-fee hybrid model have proven successful at encouraging consumers to make the permanent switch to reusable bags and at significantly reducing waste and litter from single-use bags:

- **San Jose, California**, where a hybrid model ban on thin plastic bags and fee on all other bags was enacted in 2012, has seen **89%** percent fewer bags in storm drains, **60%** fewer in creeks, and 59% fewer in streets.

- **In Los Angeles County**, which has a similar ban/free hybrid model in place, single-use bag consumption has decreased by **95%**, including a **30%** decrease in paper bag use, while saving the county taxpayers millions of dollars of bag clean-up costs.

Fees on carryout bags have also successfully reduced plastic bag use in major US cities.

- **Washington DC**, which enacted a 5 cent fee on carryout bags in 2010, has seen an approximate **60-80% decrease** in single use bags; and
- **Chicago**, which placed a 7 cent tax on bags last year, and in the first month alone experienced a **42% drop** in number of plastic and paper bags Chicagoans used to haul home their groceries.

The money collected from a fee, either on all carryout bags or on paper and thicker plastic bags in conjunction with the ban/hybrid model, should be used, at least in part, for environmental projects. Currently, municipalities including Suffolk County and City of Long Beach, are unable to allocate a portion of the funds collected from their 5 cent carryout bag fee for environmental purposes without state enabling legislation. While the Plastic Bag Task Force is due to issue a determination on the best policy for New York State by the end of the year, **we would recommend that the Governor, Senate, and Assembly ensure that this policy includes a fee component, and that a portion of that fee is directed to environmental protection projects.**

Sincerely,



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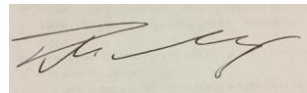
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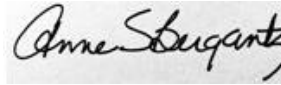
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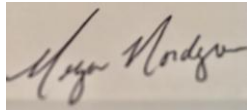
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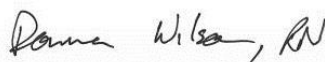
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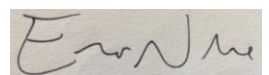
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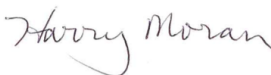
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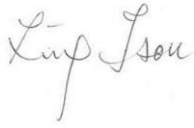


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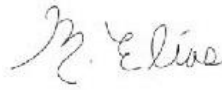


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