MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT
Low Nitrogen Fertilizer on Long Island

A.10276 - Englebright
S.8170 - Hannon

An ACT to amend the environmental conservation law, in relation to the sale or use of nitrogen fertilizer

JUSTIFICATION
Long Island’s clean waters create jobs and generate hundreds of millions of dollars every year for our regional economy. When bays, harbors, lakes, ponds and coastal waters receive more nitrogen than healthy ecosystems can process, the result is harmful algal blooms (HABs). Excessive fertilizer adds to the nitrogen burden of Long Island’s estuaries and fresh water bodies. The NYS DEC cites algal blooms and excessive nitrogen as the primary reasons many of Long Island's water bodies are impaired. Moreover, some HABs pose a serious threat to human health. These toxic algal blooms, often referred to as Red Tide, Rust Tide, Blue Green Algal blooms, or Brown Tide, spread hazardous toxins, kill fish, and seriously impair water quality.

Scientific studies identified lawn fertilizer as a contributor to excess nitrogen. In 2009 the Journal of Coastal Research estimated that fertilizers contributed 15% of the total land-based nitrogen in the Great South Bay. In 2010, NYS enacted legislation that prohibits the sale and use of lawn fertilizers containing phosphorus because of its propensity to contaminate bodies of fresh water. Phosphorus does to fresh water what nitrogen does to salt water. Long Island needs the same protection from nutrient contamination caused by fertilizers as the rest of the state.

Requiring lawn fertilizers sold and applied on Long Island to have low levels of nitrogen and be water insoluble will help protect water quality and fight HABs, while continuing to allow Long Islanders to maintain healthy lawns.

SUMMARY OF PROVISIONS
• Defines “low nitrogen fertilizer” as containing not more than 12% nitrogen by weight, of which at least half must be water insoluble nitrogen.
• Beginning December 21, 2019, retailers in Suffolk & Nassau Counties can only sell low nitrogen fertilizers.
• Only the use of low nitrogen fertilizer will be allowed in Nassau and Suffolk Counties (agriculture exempt).

CITIZENS CAMPAIGN FOR THE ENVIRONMENT SUPPORTS
A.10276/S.8170 – LOW NITROGEN FERTILIZER

CCE is an 80,000 member non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organization that works to empower communities and advocate solutions that protect public health and the natural environment

April 24, 2018

www.citizenscampaign.org