MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT
Skip the Straw

A.90 – Rosenthal
S.1477 - Hoylman

An Act to amend the environmental conservation law and the general business law, in relation to prohibitions on single-use plastic straws in restaurants

BACKGROUND
More than 500 million plastic straws are used in the U.S. every day—which are discarded and go to landfills and incinerators, or are often littered and make their way into our lakes, rivers, bays, estuaries, and oceans. Plastic straws are one of the top ten items picked up at beach cleanups, and contribute to the 18 billion pounds and 22 million pounds of plastic that end up in our oceans and Great Lakes annually, respectively.

Plastic straws don’t biodegrade—they photo-degrade and break down into small microplastics that make their way into our waters, where they are often consumed by aquatic life. When aquatic life ingests plastic, their life expectancy is cut in half. Microplastics also absorb persistent organic pollutants (long-lasting toxic chemicals like DDT, PAHs, PCBs) present in our waters. These toxins can bioaccumulate up the food chain, eventually reaching our dinner plates.

JUSTIFICATION
The overuse of single-use plastic straws—and subsequent plastic pollution—is perpetuated by restaurants that automatically provide customers with single-use plastic straws, whether or not the customer wants or needs a straw. This legislation would prevent dine-in restaurants from automatically providing customers with single-use plastic straws, and instead only provide straws ‘upon request.’ This practice will significantly cut down on the amount of single-use plastic straws that end up in landfills, incinerators, and our environment—helping to protect our water, wildlife, and public health..