MEMORANDUM IN OPPOSITION

Exempting Compostable Bags from the Checkout Bag Fee

S.B. 281- An Act Exempting Plant Based, Biodegradable and Compostable Bags from the Plastic Bag Fee

BACKGROUND

Connecticut has made significant progress in promoting reusable bag use through a statewide fee on plastic checkout bags. Further, citizens and local governments have made combatting pollution from single-use plastic bags a clear priority, having passed local ordinances prohibiting plastic checkout bags in 21 municipalities across the state. Bag fees and hybrid-bans are a proven, effective strategy to reduce plastic pollution from single-use bags. According to a recent study conducted by CCE, half of all shoppers in municipalities with a fee on plastic bags switched to reusable bags or chose not to use a bag at all.

Despite being derived from plant-based materials, compostable plastics must be separated and managed using technology specifically designed to process this waste. If discarded or disposed of improperly, these materials can escape into the environment and/or contaminate the recycling stream the same way conventional plastics do:

✓ Compostable plastics may not fully break down in a natural setting and can threaten aquatic wildlife, just like their petroleum-based counterparts.

✓ Plastic bags are easily entangled in sorting equipment, creating costly delays for Municipal Recovery Facilities (MRFs) processing recyclables from curbside single-stream programs. This is true regardless of the kind of feedstock used in manufacturing those plastics.

✓ Plastics derived from plant-based materials cannot be recycled with polyethylene from conventional bags, and therefore cannot be accepted through existing recycling programs for shrink wrap and other film plastics.

JUSTIFICATION

This legislation would exempt plant-based, so-called “biodegradable” and “compostable” bags from the statewide checkout bag fee. This exemption would create a loophole in the state’s plan to reduce pollution from single-use bags, and could result in similar impacts to our environment, wildlife, and municipal recycling facilities that the existing checkout bag fee/ban was adopted to address.

CITIZENS CAMPAIGN FOR THE ENVIRONMENT OPPOSES S.B. 281- EXEMPTING PLANT-BASED, BIODEGRADABLE AND COMPOSTABLE BAGS FROM THE PLASTIC BAG FEE

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