

GOVERNMENT SERVICES & ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE
OF THE
DUTCHESS COUNTY LEGISLATURE

Thursday, November 8, 2018

Committee Chair Truitt called the committee to order at 9:45p.m.

PRESENT: 12 AMPARO, BLACK, BOLNER, BORCHERT, GARITO,
HOUSTON, LLAVERIAS, MUNN, PULVER, SAGLIANO,
TRUITT and TYNER

ABSENT: 0

PRESENT/LATE: 0

QUORUM PRESENT

Committee Chair Truitt entertained a motion from the floor, which was seconded and carried, to suspend the rules to allow the public to address the Committee on agenda items.

The following speakers spoke in favor of Encouraging the use of reusable bags via the implantation of a surcharge on carryout disposable bags:

Steve MacAvery, Director, Environmental Management Council

Joan Underwager

Jordan Christianson, Citizens Campaign for the Environment – (Comments attached and made a part of these minutes).

No one else wishing to speak Committee Chair Truitt entertained a motion from the floor, which was seconded and carried, and the regular order of business was resumed.

2018274 A LOCAL LAW ENCOURAGING THE USE OF REUSABLE BAGS VIA THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A SURCHARGE ON CARRYOUT DISPOSABLE BAGS

On motion by Legislator Tyner, duly seconded by Legislator Amparo, the Government Services and Administration Committee discussed the foregoing resolution.

On motion by Legislator Houston, duly seconded by Assistant Majority Leader Bolner, the foregoing resolution was “Tabled”

Roll call vote on the motion to “Table” the foregoing resolution resulted as follows:

AYES: 7 Pulver, Sagliano, Bolner, Borchert, Truitt, Garito, Houston.

NAYS: 5 Black, Munn, Llaverias, Tyner, Amparo.

ABSENT: 0

Motion adopted.

There being no further business to come before this committee the meeting was adjourned.

**CITIZENS
CAMPAIGN**
FOR THE ENVIRONMENT



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Empowering Communities, Advocating Solutions.

**Testimony on Single-Use Carryout Bag Law
Dutchess County, NY
November 8, 2018**

**Testimony by Jordan Christensen, Program Coordinator
Citizens Campaign for the Environment**

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

My name is Jordan Christensen and I am a Program Coordinator for Citizens Campaign for the Environment (CCE). CCE is an 80,000 member, non-profit, non-partisan organization that empowers communities and advocates solutions to protect public health and the natural environment in New York and Connecticut. For over a decade, CCE has worked with municipalities to pass and implement policies that reduce consumer's reliance on single-use plastic and paper bags while encouraging the public to switch to reusable alternatives. **We strongly support the proposed legislation to incentivize reusable bags and reduce plastic bag pollution in Dutchess County.**

The health of our waterways and fisheries is critical to our local economy and our way of life. Locally, plastic bags are one of the most common forms of plastic pollution found in Hudson River beach cleanups. Globally, there is currently more plastic than plankton in our oceans. The World Economic Forum estimates that if we do nothing, there will be more plastic in our oceans than fish by 2050.

Plastic bags that enter our local waterways never fully break down, but rather "break up" into microplastics in our estuaries and oceans. Recent studies have detected microplastics in 94% of US tap water as well as in nearly every brand of bottled water tested. The Hudson River has some of the highest levels of microplastics found in the state, with 62,000 particles of plastic per square kilometer. These tiny pieces of plastic attract toxins, including pesticides, PCBs, and flame retardants, which work their way up the food chain to our dinner plates. Plastic pieces are being found in our water, fish, shellfish, sea salt, beer, soil, honey, and most recently, in our digestive systems. An Austrian study released last month found microplastics in human stool samples for the first time. This problem will only continue to grow unless we change our behavior and move away from single-use plastics.

While plastics bags pose a serious threat to our waterways and fisheries, paper bags also come with environmental costs. Manufacturing and shipping paper bags require even more energy and water, and create more pollution, than plastic bags. In addition, producing paper bags used in the U.S. each year requires 14 million trees. *In order to save natural resources and reduce waste, we must change consumer behavior and move away from single-use bags.*

There is no such thing as a “free” bag. In addition to the environmental costs and the impacts on our fisheries and recreation economy, single-use bags are costly to manufacture, ship, and clean up. Municipalities spend millions of dollars each year simply disposing of single-use bags and retailers in the US spend \$4 billion on single-use bags, the cost of which is built into the price of our groceries. Plastic bags not sent to landfills are often put in recycling bins, where they clog recycling machines and cost recyclers time and money to remove. Given the option to pay a small fee for these polluting, unnecessary bags or choose a more cost effective, sustainable, reusable bag, the public has overwhelmingly chose to bring their own bag.

To encourage the public to make the switch to reusable bags, municipalities are passing comprehensive legislation to curb the use of single-use plastic bags. On Long Island, Long Beach City and Suffolk County have implemented five cent fees on single-use bags with fantastic results. Grocery stores in Long Beach report upwards of 90% reductions in plastic bags, while larger chain stores in Suffolk are reporting over 80% in both plastic and paper bag use since the fee went into effect. Before Suffolk’s law went into effect, the Brookhaven Material Recycling Facility (MRF) estimated that they lost over \$100,000 per year removing clogged plastic bags from screens on their machines. The Brookhaven MRF has now reported a significant decline in plastic bags and is experiencing fewer delays from clogged machines. Residents report cleaner parking lots and roadways, and a recent beach clean up on the south shore of Suffolk County found only one plastic bag during the entire clean-up event. We are confident that Dutchess County will achieve similar, if not greater, results by placing a ten cent fee on plastic and paper bags.

Counties throughout the state are moving forward with BYOBag bills, most recently Ulster County, while the European Union has now passed a ban all single-use plastics. Plastic bag pollution impacts our residents and our communities: It is an issue Dutchess County can no longer ignore. **We urge Dutchess County to pass legislation placing a 10 cent fee on plastic and paper bags to incentivize reusable bags.**