



CONNECTICUT FOOD ASSOCIATION

March 3, 2016

Statement of the Connecticut Food Association - Environmental Committee

Wayne Pesce, President, Connecticut Food Association

In opposition of raised bill 226: AN ACT CONCERNING SINGLE-USE CARRYOUT BAGS.

The Connecticut Food Association (CFA) proudly advocates on behalf of the food retail industry. Its mission is to cultivate Connecticut's grocery industry through economic development, nutrition & wellness, environmental stewardship and community service. CFA membership covers the spectrum of diverse venues where food is sold, including single owner grocery stores, large supermarket chains, food distributors, food manufacturers, and specialty food purveyors.

On behalf of Connecticut's grocery retailers, I urge you to oppose SB 226 - To require a phased-in transition to one hundred per cent recyclable single-use carryout bags that contain not less than eighty per cent post-consumer recycled materials and to require the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to enter into a memorandum of understanding with the grocery and retail industries that provides for a fifty per cent reduction in the distribution of paper bags and plastic single-use carryout bags by 2021. **We believe this proposal has merit however existing post consumer materials called for in this bill are of poor quality for consumers and competitive sourcing of them is more costly.** In addition, several of our members who operate in Massachusetts **recently completed a three year 33% bag reduction** through chain wide initiatives via a Massachusetts MOU.

Consumers:

Disposable shopping bags are ubiquitous. From grocery stores to gas stations, they are the way we tote our purchases. These lightweight containers were introduced in the 1970s as a means of making shopping easier for consumers. However only about 2% of plastic bags are recycled in the United States. Despite being highly recyclable, only 20% of paper bags end up being recycled, while the rest share a fate with their plastic brethren. If every person in Connecticut used one less grocery bag, it would cut waste by almost 2.1 million pounds and save about \$100,000 in disposal costs. One person using reusable bags over their lifetime would remove more than 22,000 plastic bags from the environment. **Consumer education is the next critical step. Awareness and convenience are key to changing behavior,** and we frequently see that when awareness meets convenience, consumers are very willing to recycle.

Options:

A 2012 study conducted by Moore Recycling Associates Inc., is believed to be the first of its kind to examine consumers' access to recycle plastic packaging. A separate study released earlier this year found that the recycling of (flexible) plastics increased 50 percent over the last five years to reach nearly one billion pounds annually in the United States. The National Reach Study also found that **despite the prevalence of access to (flexible) plastic recycling programs, consumers are not yet using this infrastructure to its full potential.**

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Plastic bags and wraps are a valuable resource that should be recycled after use. **More than 91 percent of the U.S. population can recycle their plastic bags locally**, and additionally, nearly 75 percent of people living in the United States can recycle other types of flexible plastic wraps in their own communities. The study, which looked at flexible polyethylene film—a category that includes plastic bags, identified over 15,000 drop-off locations that collect these items for recycling. The majority of collection centers are conveniently located in local & regional grocery stores as well as national retailers.

Conclusion:

Though efficient to produce and convenient for consumers, it is crucial that plastic bags be reused and recycled. Plastic bags don't biodegrade quickly and can cause problems for wildlife when disposed of improperly. **We need to incent, educate and motivate consumers** to do what's right for our state and our planet. Through **public education, public service announcements, marketing campaigns, consumer incentives, and a sustained measurable approach** we will back initiatives that substantially reduce our collective carbon foot print. We as a united community (business, industry & government) working together need to educate and over communicate worthy reasons for Connecticut citizens to pick up a reusable bag and make the next bag thrown out be their last. CFA and our members support our states 2024 60% diversion goals and are committed to doing our part to make Connecticut a better place to live and raise our families.