

Environment Committee Public Hearing—Monday, March 11, 2019

Dear Co-Chairs, Senator Christine Cohen and Representative Mike Demicco and members of the Environment Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on several bills before the Environment Committee today, all on the subject of recycling. My name is Jane Brawerman and I am an environmental professional, as well as a member of Middletown's conservation commission.

*Raised Bill No. 7295 AAC A Recycling Program For Paper and Packaging and Requiring Certain Municipal Solid Waste Management Goals - **Support***

This bill will create a producer financed recycling program for product packaging, removing the cost burden of dealing with these materials from municipalities. CT has an existing program like this for mattresses, electronics and paint, which has proven to be a success. The program is funded and run by the manufacturers, and provides stable financing for recycling and properly managing these products.

There are many benefits of programs like this, in addition to relieving municipalities of the responsibility of dealing with ever increasing packaging waste. By putting product manufacturers in charge of recycling packaging material, it encourages them to consider recycling costs, and provides an incentive to reduce waste. A program such as this will help sustain recycling without impacting municipal budgets, especially at a time when recycling is becoming more and more complex and current markets for recyclables are at risk.

*Raised Bill 7294 AAC Bottle Redemption in the State – **Support***

This bill will result in improvements to help make CT's bottle return system more efficient and easier to use. The higher deposit of 10 cents would encourage bottle bill recycling, which is important for several reasons: bottles that are returned are more reliably recycled because they are a better product, as compared with those mixed in with single stream recycling. This would, in turn, help reduce roadside litter as well as reduce the amount of recyclables municipalities have to handle.

*Committee Bill 5019 AA Establishing a Five Cent Tax on Single Use Plastic and Paper Bags –**Suggest Substitute Language.***

Though this proposed bill is certainly a step in the right direction, it could go farther to reduce the use of single use plastic bags. The City of Middletown is currently considering a reusable bag ordinance to protect wildlife, reduce waste and improve the quality of recycling. This proposed local ordinance would ban plastic bags and place a fee on paper bags, and the fee would go back to the retailers to help cover the higher cost of the paper bags. The proposed bill could be made more a more effective by establishing a ban on single-use plastic bags, which pose a variety of environmental concerns (e.g. non-renewable petroleum based product, harmful to wildlife, contributing to the serious and widespread plastic pollution problem). As an alternative, paper bags could be offered for a fee. This type of approach would better address the concerns with single use plastic bags, and encourage people to bring their own bags

when they shop. The important message of needing to reduce waste associated with single use shopping bags would be lost by leveling a tax on all bags. Studies have shown that simply charging a fee for bags does not change people's behavior or reduce use of bags.

*Committee Bill 5384 - AA Requiring the Elimination of Single Use Styrofoam Containers - **Support***

*Committee Bill 5385 - AA Requiring the Elimination of Single Use Plastic Straws - **Support***

Both of these bills are important initiatives to reduce unnecessary and harmful waste. It is important to note that simple alternatives exist for both single use Styrofoam containers and plastic straws. Single use Styrofoam containers are harmful to the environment for many reasons, and can be replaced with alternatives such as paper, cardboard and compostable products, or customers can also be encouraged to bring their own reusable containers. Straws, often unneeded, create plastic waste and shouldn't be handed out automatically. If a straw is needed, customers can easily request one.

*Raised Bill 7296 - AAC The Recycling of Glass – **Support***

Developing a better strategy for glass recycling in CT is badly needed. Single stream recycling has made glass recycling extremely difficult. It ends up as landfill cover for the most part, or is sent to a facility where it undergoes an expensive optical sorting process. Requiring the use of recycled glass in glass bottles sold in CT, also a part of this bill, will help build a market for recycled glass, also critical to recycling success.

*Raised Bill 1001 - AAC The Recycling and Disposal of Smoke Detectors – **Support***

This bill will consider development of an extended producer responsibility (EPR) program for smoke detectors. There is currently no good way to recycle or dispose of smoke detectors in CT. They should not be put in the trash, and are not taken at hazardous waste collection days. An EPR for smoke detectors would help address this problem.

Thank you for your consideration of these important issues. If you have questions, please feel free to contact me at jlbrawerman@gmail.com.