



**For the Environment Committee
Testimony of Alicea Charamut, River Steward
March 8, 2019**

The Connecticut River Conservancy is the voice for the Connecticut River watershed, from source to sea. We collaborate with partners across four states to protect and advocate for your rivers and educate and engage communities. We bring people together to prevent pollution, improve habitat, and promote enjoyment of your river and its tributary streams. Healthy rivers support healthy economies.

The Connecticut River Conservancy (CRC) **supports the following bills pertaining to plastic and polystyrene:**

- **HB 5385 AA REQUIRING THE ELIMINATION OF SINGLE-USE PLASTIC STRAWS**
- **SB 229 AA PROHIBITING THE USE OF STYROFOAM TRAYS IN CONNECTICUT SCHOOLS**
- **HB 5384 AA REQUIRING THE ELIMINATION OF SINGLE-USE STYROFOAM CONTAINERS**
- **SB 1003 AA CONCERNING THE USE OF SINGLE-USE PLASTIC AND PAPER BAGS** *with changes.*

THANK YOU for these efforts to address single-use plastic and polystyrene. CRC coordinates the Source to Sea Cleanup which is a yearly trash cleanup of the Connecticut River system all along the four-state watershed (NH, VT, MA, CT) – rivers & streams, shorelines, parks, boat launches, trails and more. Each fall, volunteer group leaders coordinate local cleanup sites where thousands of participants of all ages and abilities spend a few hours picking up trash. **Data on the trash collected during the cleanup has proven that single-use plastic bags, straws, and single-use polystyrene fast food containers are at the top of this list of usual suspects found in our rivers.**

Last year in Connecticut **362 plastic bags, 705 polystyrene cups, and enough polystyrene pieces to fill a 30 gallon barrel** were reported found by groups that submitted trash tallies. While we do not request specific information on numbers of plastic straws, they are listed as a commonly found item by many groups.

Reduction in unnecessary use of all polystyrene materials even if they are not found in our rivers during our cleanup is also a priority for CRC. We strongly support a prohibition of the use of Styrofoam trays in schools. Considering the escalating solid waste crisis many municipalities are currently scrambling to deal with, we should encourage more sustainable practices in our schools.

Please amend SB 1003 AA CONCERNING THE USE OF SINGLE-USE PLASTIC AND PAPER BAGS to include a charge for paper bags. Utilization of any single-use bag should be discouraged and a move toward reusable bags should be the goal.

The cost of single-use plastics to our local economies and our environmental health is rising exponentially. In addition to the 2,853 volunteers that helped haul trash from our riverbanks in 2018, **more than 700 people have signed our petition asking that producers, businesses, and government work to overhaul the way we use plastics.** These bills help to advance the overhaul. Thank you again putting forth these bills to reduce waste and litter from harmful single-use products.