

Public Hearing – March 11, 2019  
Environment Committee

Testimony Submitted by Commissioner Katie S. Dykes

**HB 1003 – An Act Concerning the Use of Single-Use Plastic and Paper Bags**

**HB 5019 – An Act Establishing a Five-Cent Tax on Single-Use Bags**

**HB 5384 – An Act Requiring the Elimination of Single-Use Styrofoam Containers**

**HB 5385 – An Act Requiring the Elimination of Single-Use Plastic Straws**

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on the above bills. These bills are intended to reduce the use of single use bags, Styrofoam containers, and straws. The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) supports measures that prevent and reduce litter on both land and in our waterways, especially those that flow into Long Island Sound. Plastic bags, Styrofoam containers, and straws are among the items that most frequently wind up as litter found on our shoreline.<sup>1</sup>

Plastic bags are a serious environmental concern for two reasons:

- They escape into the environment, often ending up in waterways and harming marine life through ingestion, entanglement, and pathogens.<sup>2</sup>
- They are a major contaminant in the curbside recycling stream, where they become entwined in sorting equipment and must be manually removed, decreasing the efficiency of sorting and reducing the value of potentially recyclable material. In addition to the impact on recycling equipment and processes, entanglement raises worker safety concerns.

Similarly, plastic straws and Styrofoam containers become litter or otherwise enter the environment, waterways, and ocean. None of these items can be recycled in our curbside recycling system, and some, including Styrofoam containers containing styrene, include constituents that are linked to human health risks. These items contaminate the environment in Connecticut and across the oceans, can fatally harm marine life, and can easily be substituted with reusable alternatives. DEEP urges the Committee to support the Governor's budget proposal, which includes a ten-cent fee on single-use plastic bags (SB 877).

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<sup>1</sup> [Building a Clean Swell: 2018 Report](#), Ocean Conservancy, International Coastal Clean Up, pages 18-19.

<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/articles/2018/09/24/plastic-pollution-affects-sea-life-throughout-the-ocean>).

There are many approaches to consider in curbing litter and marine debris, and DEEP staff would be happy to work with this Committee and other proponents on any questions related to single-use items and their impact on the environment.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on this proposal. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Mandi Careathers, the Department's legislative liaison, at [Mandi.Careathers@ct.gov](mailto:Mandi.Careathers@ct.gov).