

Dear Connecticut Environment Committee:

Reference: S.B. No. 1003 – Banning “single-use” plastic carry-out bags

H.B. No. 5019 – Taxing “single-use” plastic and paper carry-out bags

I’m very much opposed to both of these proposed bills.

First of all “single-use” bag is a misnomer. In my house (as in most others) we save our plastic shopping bags and use them again and again for many purposes, including carrying dirty or wet items, and especially to line our trash cans. Others I know also use them to dispose of cat litter and dirty diapers. One of the ways we reuse paper bags is to package our newspapers for recycling.

These bills are ill-advised, baseless and harmful. They’re harmful to the health, safety, and welfare of Connecticut’s residents, and harmful to the environment they purportedly would protect.

- Environment - Conventional wisdom on plastic checkout bags is upside-down. Study after study analyzing the life cycle of various types of bags find that plastic bags use the fewest resources and cause the least environmental impact. For example, a recent Danish EPA study found organic cotton bags to be the most environmentally destructive—an organic cotton bag would need to be used every day for over 54 years to compete with a plastic bag reused just once, considering water pollution, energy use, and 12 other environmental categories.
- Health and Safety – The “reusable bags” encouraged by the bills pose health hazards, as they’d be prone to cross-contamination and could be a breeding ground for bacteria if not washed after use (as recommended by the CDC), especially if stored in a hot car. (Convenient, right?) Especially at-risk for foodborne illnesses would be the elderly, pregnant women, young children, and those with compromised immune systems. (Note: Emergency room visits and deaths due to foodborne illness spiked in San Francisco County after their bag ban went into effect, with similar findings in other California jurisdictions banning bags.)

Viruses can survive on these “reusable bags” for weeks. Had you heard about the Oregon soccer team who, it was proven, became infected with norovirus from a contaminated reusable bag? Thus a healthy person can spread a virus, including the flu and measles, by using a contaminated bag. You’d be putting grocery bag packers and their customers at risk of illness.

- Welfare – Instead of reusing our plastic checkout bags for a variety of purposes, including to line our trash cans, we’d now need to purchase our own truly single-use plastic trash bags (which have a greater impact on the environment), in addition to purchasing, washing and storing “reusable bags.” This would particularly impact lower-income residents and the disabled.

These bills would harm the environment and harm Connecticut residents, especially the most vulnerable among us. And they would prove to be yet another onerous mandate that will prompt more businesses and residents to flee the state. We’re already over-taxed and overburdened by regulations!

Connecticut residents should remain free to use the checkout bags that are in the best interests of our families and the environment. It’s not the government’s role to “encourage” us to do otherwise.

Reference: H.B. no. 5384 – Banning Styrofoam containers

H.B. no. 5385 – Banning plastic straws

I'm against these two bills, as well. They claim to be intended to "reduce litter in parks, waterways and urban centers and to create cost-savings in the recycling process." Styrofoam containers and plastic straws are useful products. If litter is the problem, then let's address littering—instead of punishing all residents by implementing these bills, let's crack down on those who litter. Otherwise, why not just ban anything and everything that is ever littered?

I'm sure other types of cost-savings could be found in the recycling process, if needed.

Reference: H.B. no. 7294 – Increasing bottle redemption

I'm against this bill. It's difficult and costly enough already for residents to sort through and return bottles for redemption to various places. (Requiring more time on the road and thus more pollution.) And it's onerous on businesses. Now you want to double the fees and expand the types of containers charged with a fee? If anything, I'd say do away with bottle redemption, and let us just recycle these bottles/cans with other recyclables. This bill would be just one more reason for residents and businesses to look into relocating out of this burdensome state.

Sincerely,

Cathy Reiss

Newtown, CT