



# SIERRA CLUB

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Dear Environment Committee Chairs Cohen and Demicco, Vice-Chairs Gresko and Kushner, Ranking Members Harding and Miner, and distinguished members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Sierra Club and our more than 11,000 members and 30,000 supporters in Connecticut, thank you for the opportunity to testify on five bills before you today, House Bill 1003, House Bill 7298, House Bill 5384, HB 5385, HB 7294.

## **HB 1003- AAC SINGLE-USE PLASTIC AND PAPER BAGS**

It is estimated that over a billion single use plastic grocery bags will be used in Connecticut this year and only about 5% are recycled. They pollute water, endanger wildlife, and they are made of dirty fossil fuels meaning they increase our carbon footprint.

It is high time that Connecticut passes a bill that will get rid of the single-use plastic and paper bags that are so destructive to our environment. Sierra Club Connecticut supports the elimination of single-use plastic carryout bags and supports this bill only if amendments are made to ensure that this legislation results in an elimination of plastic carry-out bags and moves consumers to bringing their own reusable bags: add a 10 cent fee for paper, remove the exception for bags 12 mil and higher, and define reusable to disallow plastic.

Because paper bags are at least as harmful as plastic bags, we urge this bill be amended to charge for paper bags of at least 10 cents. 5 cents is not enough to change anyone's behavior. The sad fact is that paper bags take about 4 times as much energy to produce as plastic bags and of course trees are cut to make them and an obscene amount of water is necessary to convert wood pulp to a paper bag.

## **HOUSE BILL 7298, AN ACT CONCERNING THE PERMITTING FOR CERTAIN SOLID WASTE FACILITIES AND THE DESIGNATION OF RECYCLABLE ITEMS**

The language in this bill is similar to language from legislation from 2017 (HB 5502), where a 90-day automatic approval timeline for permits issued by DEEP was instated. When the legislature realized the potential for hasty and inferior decisions in such a limited time frame, a compromise was reached in 2018, amending the bill. This bill appears to reinstate the potential for hasty and inferior decisions.

This bill would put in place a 90-day automatic approval timeline for certain permits issued by DEEP, such as solid waste transfer stations. This limited timeline hinders the process and has the potential to ignore any of the health, safety and environmental problems that could result in approving commercial permits without proper review. It also expands the numbers and types of permits, which could have a direct negative impact on recycling laws here in Connecticut.

We recognize the need for DEEP to streamline its permitting process. However, we do not support an inflexible time frame that has the potential to do damage to the health and safety of our communities and our environment. We urge you to reject this bill.

## **HB 5384- AN ACT ELIMINATING POLYSTYRENE FOOD SERVICE CONTAINERS**

Sierra Club Connecticut supports a ban of ban polystyrene food service items. Polystyrene comes in two forms: rigid and foam. The rigid form is used for clear food containers, plates, bowls, beverage

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cups and lids, utensils, and straws. The foam form is used for plates, insulated beverage cups and bowls, clamshell food containers, and trays.

Polystyrene food service items should be eliminated because:

- Polystyrene is based on styrene, a neurotoxin and probable carcinogen.<sup>1</sup>
- Plastic production is directly connected to climate change as 99% of plastics are derived from fossil fuels.
- U.S. shorelines are littered with millions of tons of single-use plastic. 91% of the plastic we use is not recycled and instead ends up in landfills or the ocean. Polystyrene items make up the fifth through seventh largest type of litter from land-based sources found on U.S. coasts.<sup>2</sup>
- Polystyrene items harm wildlife. The foam form in particular is often mistaken as food by both domesticated and wild animals.<sup>3 4</sup>
- Polystyrene does not biodegrade and although they do fragment through mechanical action and photodegradation in the presence of light, these processes are slow taking an estimated 200+ years to complete.

### **HB 5385- AN ACT ELIMINATING SINGLE-USE PLASTIC STRAWS**

Sierra Club Connecticut supports elimination of single-use plastic straws. Plastic straws are produced in enormous quantities, and are derived from fossil fuels.. People in the U.S. use hundreds of millions of plastic straws -- one straw per person every day. 91% of the plastic we use is not recycled and instead ends up in landfills or the ocean, killing millions of marine animals each year. Plastic straws are among the top ten items found in beach cleanups. Plastic straws never biodegrade, and harm or kill wildlife when ingested.

### **HB 7294- AAC BOTTLE REDEMPTION IN CONNECTICUT**

Sierra Club Connecticut supports modernization of Connecticut's bottle bill to ensure that this important recycling program remains an effective tool to reduce litter and incentivize recycling in our communities,

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony.

Sincerely,

Vanessa Villamil  
Ann Gadwah, Chapter Chair  
Samantha Dynowski, State Director  
Sierra Club Connecticut

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "Styrene", Report on Carcinogens, Twelfth Edition, 2011, p. 383-391, <http://ntp.niehs.nih.gov/ntp/roc/twelfth/roc12.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Ocean Conservancy, "International Coastal Cleanup 2013 Report", p. 14  
<http://www.oceanconservancy.org/our-work/international-coastal-cleanup/2013-trash-free-seas-report.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Olivia Feinstein\* & Peter Hodum University of Puget Sound, Tacoma WA "Northern Fulmars (*Fulmarus glacialis*) as bio-indicators of endocrine disrupting plasticizers in the marine surface environment"  
[http://soundideas.pugetsound.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1168&context=summer\\_research](http://soundideas.pugetsound.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1168&context=summer_research)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.backyardchickens.com/t/23861/chickens-are-eating-styrofoam-help>

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