Testimony by Skip the Straw Greenwich to

The Environmental Committee – March 11, 2019

Re: RAISED BILL  HB 5385 –

AN ACT ELIMINATING SINGLE-USE PLASTIC STRAWS

Skip the Straw Greenwich is a campaign that aims to increase awareness about the impact of single-use plastics, specifically plastic straws derived from petroleum and plant-based bioplastics. Our mission is to protect our ecosystems, environment and economy through community outreach and education. Plastic waste enters rivers and the Long Island Sound and litters our neighborhoods, choking economies, harming wildlife and impacting public health. In the coastal town of Greenwich, local waterways and shorelines that are an important part of our lifestyle, economy and culture are in peril due to plastic pollution. Skip the Straw Greenwich encourages residents and businesses to take simple steps, like refusing plastic straws and serving plastic straws by request only or offering an eco-friendly alternative, to protect these natural resources and stem the tide of litter and waste.

Single-use plastic straws are a significant source of litter on our streets and pollution in our waterways in Greenwich. Skip the Straw Greenwich recently organized a clean up at Greenwich Point Park, which brought together over 150 volunteers to collect more than 1,500 pounds of litter and marine debris in just two hours. Straws accounted for a significant percentage of the debris; over 120 straws were estimated to have been removed from the environment. Using the Clean Swell app, I have personally picked up and recorded over 250 straws in my neighborhood and along our shorelines. Every clean up, I collect handfuls of plastic straws without fail. For only minutes of use, these plastic straws would have remained in the environment for hundreds of years, causing harm to marine life and diminishing the beauty of our waterways.

Plastic straws are no longer accepted recyclables in Greenwich. They are challenging to sort at the recycling center because of their shape and size, and because they lack a resin code, they contaminate the recycling. Instead they must be incinerated at a cost to taxpayers and the detriment of our air and soil quality.
Municipalities, states and countries across our globe have already explicitly banned plastic straws or only allow straws by request, and countless others are currently considering enacting straw legislation, including neighboring Rhode Island. Connecticut must be a leader by taking strong action to eliminate single-use plastic straws. Skip the Straw Greenwich fully supports HB 5385. However, we feel that it does not go far enough. A ban is necessary to curb the deleterious effects of disposable plastic straws on our ecosystems, environment and economy. We believe the ban should extend (with the exception of those with disabilities) to restaurants, vendors, grocery stores and other persons, entities and businesses engaged in the sale of food products, not only in full service restaurants.

Julie DesChamps, Founder, Skip the Straw Greenwich

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