

Environment Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6608

AN ACT CONCERNING THE DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE-USE PLASTIC

Title: STRAWS BY CERTAIN RESTAURANTS.

Vote Date: March 3, 2023

Vote Action: JFS

PH Date: 2/15/2023

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Environment Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

To curtail the distribution single use plastic straws for ecological reasons

JFS LANGUAGE

Amendment LCO# 5458 remove the enforcement provision of the bill and replace said provision with a requirement that restaurants train employees concerning the requirements of the bill. Substitute also added stirrers to the prohibition of the bill.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Katie S. Dykes, Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Energy & Environment Protection: Commissioner Dykes testified in support of the concept of the bill. The department does not have the authority or staffing to inspect restaurant food service operations or assess fines. We welcome the opportunity to work with the committee to address the specifics of HB 6606.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Kim O'Rourke, Recycling Coordinator, City of Middletown: Ms. O'Rourke testified in support but would like to see the bill expanded to include other single item and straws to be provided only upon request.

Mason Capone, President, Conard High School, Environmental Club.:

Mason supports the bill and so does the club. Include with the testimony are direct quotes from various members of the club and the large roll of plastic pollution.

Carmela Garafolo: Ms. Garafolo testified of the harm plastic straws due to wildlife and the tiny pieces are hard to destroy.

Lori Brown, Ct. League of Conservation Votes:

Ms. Brown testified that only 9% of the plastic produced in the United States are properly recycled and not showing any sounds of slowing down production. The key is prevention, and this bill will help our state with better waste management policies.

Karen Evans, Advisor, Environmental Club:

Ms. Evens submitted testimony that as an educator it is important to teach our students ways to reduce the amount of trash we create.

Passing legislation requiring people to ask for straws will reduce waste and can change consumer behavior creating less waste.

Jamila Viandier:

Jamila testified that the world produces an estimated 400 million tons of waste annually. Any amount of plastic reduction benefits every ecosystem.

Anne Schmidt, Groton Conservation Commission:

Ms. Schmidt testified as a grandmother and member of the Groton Conservation commission and a scientist by training she is extremely worried about the world her grand daughters will inherit. If we don't take serious action today our grandchildren will inherit a plant less livable with extreme temperatures, weather events and increased periods of drought. All this will lead to increased food insecurity, wildfires and sea level.

Elizabeth Raisbeck, Co-chair, Groton Conservation Advocates:

Ms. Raisbeck testified that as co-chair of the non-profit Groton Conservation Advocates, we already have a ban as part of our plastic ordinance, and we see significant compliance and no complaints to the town.

Alicea Charamut, Executive Director, Rivers Alliance of Connecticut:

Ms. Charamut testified on how several years ago a 9-year-old volunteer Leah, testified about how many straws she had found, and she gave up plastic straws along with her family, Girls Scout Troop studying the problem of plastic pollution. This bill is not a full ban on plastic straws and does not prevent anyone who needs a straw from getting a straw from a full-service restaurant.

Ann Gadwah, Advocacy and Outreach Organizer, Sierra Club Connecticut:

Ms. Gadwah testified on behalf of the Sierra Club that plastic production is a direct connection to climate change as 99% of plastics are derived from fossil fuels. U.S. shorelines are littered with millions of tons of plastic because 91% of the plastic we sue is not recycled.

Mary Hogue:

Ms. Hogue testified that by reducing plastic straws in sit-down restaurants it would cut litter that hurts wildlife and breaks into tiny pieces that are hard to destroy.

Annie Hornish, Connecticut State Director, Humane Society of the United States:

Ms. Hornish testified that single use plastic is detrimental to the environment. Many seabirds, turtles, seals and other marine mammals are killed each year after ingesting plastic.

Anne Horlick, State Director, Clean Water Action:

Ms. Hulick testified that this bill will go a long way to reducing waste and pollution in our water and environment. The bill is long overdue and there is a safe alternative to plastic straws.

William Lucey, Long Island Soundkeeper, Save the Sound.

Mr. Lucey testified that with over 70 beach cleanups year plastic straws are a common piece of plastic picked up by our volunteers. The bill takes a small step towards removing plastic from our environment. The need for people that require straws based on disability is important and while we commend the education for diners it does little for take-out meals.

Amy Blaymore Paterson, Executive Director, Connecticut Land Conservation Council:

Ms. Patterson submitted testimony on land conservation and the care and constant source of litter. This bill is an important step in the right direction and will help to raise public awareness to the hazards of these plastics pose to the environment.

Over 35 people also submitted testimony in favor of the bill.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Mary-Ann Langton:

Ms. Langton submitted testimony in opposition to the bill. Plastic straws are an essential independent living tool for people with disabilities. I am unable to drink from a glass or cup due to my disabilities. Plastic straws are an essential adaption for my everyday living. At the present time a majority of restaurants only provide paper straws and do not have a supply of plastic straws. Strengthen the language by making plastic straws available upon request by people with disabilities.

Kathy Flaherty, Executive Director, Connecticut Legal Rights Project.

Ms. Flaherty submitted essentially the same testimony she has each year. Access to single use plastic straws is a disability rights issue not just an environmental issue. I have included several links to several articles that you may find helpful.

Reported by: Pamela Bianca

Date: March 6, 2023