



April 29, 2018

Stamford Board of Representatives  
888 Washington Blvd, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
PO Box 10152  
Stamford, CT 06904-2152

**RE: Stamford Needs a Comprehensive Single-Use Bag Policy**

Dear Board of Representatives Members,

We, the undersigned, respectfully urge the City of Stamford Board of Representatives to move forward with a local ordinance to curb the use of single-use checkout bags this year. Plastic and paper checkout bags carry significant adverse environmental impacts, require significant investments of fossil fuel to produce and cost municipalities money.

The negative impacts plastic pollution have on our environment are well documented. Plastic bags are not biodegradable and frequently end up contaminating our waterways and open spaces, where they can persist for thousands of years. Plastic pollution from single-use plastic bags is frequently confused for food and consumed by fish and other wildlife, which can have disastrous effects on our marine species.

While the impacts of plastic pollution on our environment are vast, the most compelling argument in favor of a disposable bag policy is that they provide significant cost savings to municipalities. The solid waste disposal costs related to single-use bags (in addition to the cost of cleaning up plastic litter in our streets, beaches and storm drains) rest on our cities and towns, resulting in millions of taxpayer dollars being wasted each year.

Plastic bags famously cannot be recycled, as they frequently clog or damage recycling equipment, resulting in costly delays. Most plastic bags consumed in Connecticut are incinerated, which creates significant air-quality and negative health impacts in our state's most underserved communities. Many more end up in our environment, where they threaten wildlife and contribute to the growing problem of plastic pollution in our oceans. *To save taxpayer money, reduce litter in our community and open spaces and protect our air and water resources, municipalities should adopt policies aimed at reducing or eliminating single-use shopping bags.*

There are three common approaches to reducing single-use bag pollution:

1. A prohibition on thin plastic bags;
2. A fee on all carryout bags (plastic, paper, and reusable);
3. A hybrid model, which prohibits single-use plastic bags and places on fee on all other carryout bags.

While plastic bags have the greatest impact on our environment, a ban on plastic bags may not be enough to effectively cut down on the public's disposable bag use. Some municipalities that have

simply banned thin plastic bags have seen retailers switch to a heavier-gauge “reusable” plastic bag, or simply do away with plastic and provide their customers with paper bags, free of charge. This can result in a slower response, with fewer consumers making the permanent switch to reusable bags. A model that places a fee on carryout bags or a ban/fee hybrid model have proven to be effective at encouraging consumers to make a behavior shift towards reusable bag use and significantly reducing waste from single-use bags:

- **San Jose, CA-** a hybrid model (ban on thin plastic bags and fee on all other bags) was enacted in 2012 and has resulted in an **89%** fewer plastic bags becoming clogged in storm drains, **60%** fewer ending up in rivers and streams, and **59%** fewer plastic bags littering the streets.
- **Los Angeles County, CA-** LA has a similar ban/free hybrid model in place, resulting in single-use bag consumption decreasing by **95%**, including a **30%** decrease in paper bag use, while saving the county taxpayers millions of dollars of bag clean-up costs.

Fees on carryout bags have also successfully reduced plastic bag use in major US cities:

- **Washington DC-** enacted a 5 cent fee on carryout bags in 2010 and has seen an approximate **60-80% decrease** in single use bag use; and
- **Chicago, IL-** placed a 7 cent tax on bags last year, and in the first month alone experienced a **42% drop** in the number of plastic and paper bags Chicagoans used to haul home their groceries.

As you know, our neighboring towns of Westport and Greenwich, CT have already banned plastic bags, along with over a dozen municipalities in our neighboring states that have passed similar ordinances aimed at reducing single-use plastic and paper bag use. There is an appetite among Stamford residents to make a positive change for our community by taking action on disposable bags. *A recent survey of Stamford residents, undertaken by BYO Stamford, reveals that 75% of respondents support a ban on single use plastic bags!* Additionally, of the 108 households that responded to the survey (representing 304 Stamford residents):

- ✓ 45% support a ban on single use plastic bags and a fee on paper bags;
- ✓ 30% support the ban but not the fee;
- ✓ 25% oppose a ban.

Using lessons learned from nearby municipalities and communities around the nation, **we urge the City of Stamford to move forward with a comprehensive policy aimed at reducing single-use bag use by addressing all bag types, banning plastic bags and charging a fee on paper bags, to encourage consumer behavior change and promote the switch to reusable bags.**

Respectfully Submitted,

- Citizens Campaign for the Environment
- BYO Stamford
- BYO Greenwich
- Innovage Stamford
- SoundWaters
- Surfrider Foundation, CT Chapter