Re: Urge support for law to reduce the use of plastic bags using California as a model

Dear Messrs. Cuomo, Flanagan, Klein, Heastie, Kolb and Ms. Stewart-Cousins:

We write to urge you to enact legislation to address the growing problem of plastic bags in New York State.

The Task Force appointed by Governor Cuomo to create statewide plastic bag ban, after the state overturned the New York City plastic bag fee law in 2016, has further detailed the problem but failed to take the essential step of recommending a specific approach.

The Governor said it best upon the creation of the Task Force; “The costly and negative impact of plastic bags on New York’s natural resources is a statewide issue that demands a statewide solution.” According to the Administration, “residents use 23 billion plastic bags annually. A significant number of these bags make their way into littering the environment, harm wildlife, and are ever-present in waterways, along streets and in oceans and lakes. Moreover, these bags do not biodegrade in water – they persist for years. The New York City Department of Sanitation currently estimates that it collects an average of 1,700 tons of plastic bags per week, costing $12.5 million per year in disposal expenses.”

This problem is not unique to New York; it is a global problem. According to a recent report, experts estimate that over eight million metric tons of plastic waste ends up in the world’s oceans each year, and is likely to increase dramatically over the next decade unless nations act.

The amount of plastics waste found in the ocean is the equivalent of “five plastic grocery bags filled with plastic for every foot of coastline in the world.” Experts estimate that by 2025, the amount of plastic waste entering the oceans would double to the equivalent of 10 bags per foot of coastline. The plastic that ends up in the ocean isn’t just unsightly and harmful to aquatic life; it resurfaces in the food chain, including fish and shellfish.

What should be done?—New York State must enact policies that are consistent with those of California which has two major components: (1) a statewide ban on thin plastic bags (under 2.25 mils)—the ones most often distributed by supermarkets (those with handles, not the ones used to wrap foodstuffs); and (2) a minimum 10-cent fee for paper & reusable, thicker plastic bags.

California’s experience is most instructive for New York. Like New York, California has a large, diverse population with large urban areas and a substantial coastline. The law has been in effect for over a year, and has been described by the Los Angeles Times, “Californians took in stride the sudden absence of some 13 billion bags that in previous years were handed out at grocery checkout counters and by other retailers of all sorts.”

Consumers adjusted easily in their shopping experiences. Again according to the Los Angeles Times, “Plastic bags (both the banned and the legal variety) accounted for 3.1% of the litter collected from the state’s beaches during the 2017 Coastal Cleanup Day, down from 7.4% in 2010.”
The fear that the bag fees disproportionately impact low-income communities has turned out to be overblown, bag fees have been shown to reduce bag consumption across income levels. California mitigated the potential impact on low income communities by making clear that in intent of the fee was to encourage people to bring their own bags and also by exempting purchases made with WIC vouchers.

We urge you to take immediate action to reduce litter and the fossil fuels that create them, save tax dollars, and protect the environment and wildlife by enacting plastic bag legislation similar to California in 2018. We look forward to your support and to working with you on this important environmental issue.

Sincerely,

100 Jefferson Avenue Block Association
Brooklyn

350nyc.org
New York City

Advocates for Springfield
Springfield Center

All Our Energy
Point Lookout, NY

American Littoral Society
New York City

Artichoke Dance Company
Brooklyn

Bash the Trash Environmental Arts
Hastings-on-Hudson

Bean Counters Unlimited
Binghamton

Bethlehem Missionary Church
Queens Village

Big Reuse
Brooklyn

BK ROT
Brooklyn

Bronx Climate Justice North
Bronx

Brooklyn Grange, LLC
Brooklyn

Brooklyn Queens Land Trust
Brooklyn

Broome Tioga Green Party
Binghamton

BYOBag, Sustainable Warwick
Warwick

Cafeteria Culture
New York

Candy Kid's Day Care Center LLC
Brooklyn

Carbon Tax Center
New York

Carbon Xprint LLC
New York

Catskill Mountainkeeper
Livingston Manor

Cattaraugus-Chautauqua for Clean Water
Little Valley

Center for Oceanic Awareness, Research, and Education (COARE)
Oakland

Centro de Servicio y Colaboración Comunitaria
Bronx

Charybdis Investments International
High Falls

Chatham Wine & Liquor
Chatham

Church Women United in New York State
Rochester

Citizen Advocates for Sustainable Energy
Canaan
<p>| Citizens Committee for New York City | Damascus Citizens for Sustainability |
| New York | Callicoon |
| Citizens for Clean Water | Dancewave Inc. |
| Brackney | Brooklyn |
| Citizens For Water | Dawn Gallagher Global Good |
| New York City | New York |
| Clean and Healthy New York | Dean Street Block Association |
| Albany | Brooklyn |
| Cleanup North Brooklyn | Dept. of Small Interventions |
| Brooklyn | Brooklyn |
| ClientEarth US | Dryden Resource Awareness Coalition |
| New York | Dryden |
| Climate Reality NYC Metro Chapter | Earth Day Initiative |
| New York City | New York |
| ClimateMama | East Coast Center for Research &amp; Learning |
| New York | Elmhurst |
| Coalition Against Pilgrim Pipelines--New York | East New York 4 Gardens Inc |
| Saugerties | Brooklyn |
| Coalition Against the Rockaway Pipeline | Eco-Poetry.org (Environmental Literature &amp; Alerts) |
| New York | Brooklyn |
| Coalition to Protect New York | ELCA |
| Spencer | New York |
| Coalition to Save Hempstead Harbor | Elders Climate Action |
| Sea Cliff | Albany |
| Coastal Preservation Network | Empire State Consumer Project |
| College Point | Rochester |
| CodePink LI, Women for Peace | Empire State Indivisible |
| Northport | NYC |
| Coxsackie Earthday | Environmental Advocates |
| Coxsackie | Albany |
| Creative Jazz Organization, Inc. | Environmental Justice Task Force |
| Cambria Heights | Buffalo |
| Croton Climate initiative | Fashiondex Inc. |
| Croton | NY |
| Curtis HS Environmental Club | Federated Blocks of Laurelton |
| Staten Island | Laurelton |</p>
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MOVE INC
Brooklyn

Nakorwa
New Rochelle

Napela
Staten Island

National Wildlife Federation, NYC Eco-Schools
New York

Natural Resources Defense Council
NYC

Neighbors Allied for Good Growth
Brooklyn

Neighbors of the Onondaga Nation
Syracuse

New Paltz Climate Action
New Paltz

New York Lawyers for the Public Interest
New York

New York League of Conservation Voters
New York

New York Public Interest Research Group
New York

New York Society for Ethical Culture
New York City

Newtown Creek Alliance
Brooklyn

NMPP (Northern Manhattan Perinatal Partnership)
New York

North American Climate, Conservation and Environment (NACCE)
Roosevelt

North Country 350 Alliance
Colton

NY Buddhist Climate Action Network
New York

NY/NJ Baykeeper
Matawan

NYC Friends of Clearwater
Brooklyn

NYC H2O
NYC

Operation SPLASH
Freeport

OWS Special Projects Affinity Group
New York

P.E.A.C.E. for PEACE
Brooklyn

PAUSE - People of Albany United for Safe Energy
Albany

Peacemakers of Schoharie County
Summit

People Not Pipelines
Sidney

People’s Climate Movement - Capital Region
Albany

Plasticbaglaws.org
New York

Pluma Poetica del Arte, Inc.
New York

Plymouth Friends for Clean Water
South Plymouth

Protecting Our Waters
Stone Ridge

PS10 Water Dreamers
Brooklyn

PS 10 Zero Waste/Green Team
Brooklyn

Q Gardens Community Farm
Brooklyn

Quaker Earthcare, Ithaca Monthly Meeting
Ithaca

Rainforest Relief
New York City
RDC Social Justice Board
Hawthorne

Redemptoristine Nuns of New York
Beacon

RENewYorkCity
Brooklyn

Residents Allied for the Future of Tioga (RAFT)
Owego

Riverkeeper
Ossining

ROAR (Religious Organizations Along the River)
Hawthorne

Rockaway Waterfront Alliance
Far Rockaway

Science Language and Arts School
Brooklyn

SEDNA Foundation
Los Angeles

Seneca Lake Guardian
Watkins Glen

Serpentine Art and Nature Commons, Inc.
Staten Island

Sharon Springs Against Hydrofracking
Sharon Springs

Sims Municipal Recycling
Brooklyn

Single Payer New York
Ithaca

Sludgestoppers Task Force
Long Beach

Social Ventures
Ithaca

Solidarity Committee, Capital District
Albany

South Asian Fund For Education, Scholarship and Training (SAFEST)
New York

South Bronx Community Association
Bronx

South Shore Audubon Society
Island Park

Spatial Design Studio, Inc.
Salt Point

Srs. of St. Joseph of Rochester Global Environment Committee
Rochester

Stone Quarry House
Ithaca

Stop the Algonquin Pipeline Expansion
Rye

Students Against A Vanishing Environment
Peru

Sullivan Area Citizens for Responsible Energy Development
Bethel

SUNY New Paltz Environmental Task Force
New Paltz

Surfrider Foundation - NYC Chapter
Brooklyn

Surfrider Foundation, Eastern Long Island Chapter
East Hampton

Sustainable Cortland
Cortland

Sustainable McDonough
McDonough

Sustainable Tompkins
Ithaca
Sustainable Warwick
Warwick NY

The Heights Urban Empowerment, Inc.
New York

Tompkins County Environmental Management Council
Ithaca
Trevor Day School's Environment Club
New York

Unitarian Universalist Women's Association- Metro District
New York

United for Action
New York

Upper Green Side
New York

Upstream Policy
San Francisco

Ursulines of the Roman Union - Eastern Province
New Rochelle

UUCB Green Sanctuary
Owego

Waterkeeper Alliance
New York

Weather Medic Inc
North Tonawanda

WESPAC Foundation, Inc
White Plains

West 80s Neighborhood Association
New York City

West Dryden Residents Against the Pipeline
Freeville

Western NY Environmental Alliance
Buffalo

Youth Arts New York
New York

Zen Mountain Monastery
Mount Tremper