

March 22, 2019

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor  
State of New York  
Executive Chamber  
New York State Capitol  
Albany, NY 12224

Honorable Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Temporary President and Majority Leader  
New York State Senate  
Legislative Office Building, Room 907  
Albany, NY 12247

Honorable Carl Heastie, Speaker  
New York State Assembly  
Legislative Office Building, Room 932  
Albany, NY 12248

**RE: Single-Use Bag Waste Budget Proposal**

Dear Governor Cuomo, Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, and Speaker Heastie:

We strongly urge New York State action on addressing single-use carryout bags in the final 2019-20 budget.

Our evidence-based policy preference is to support a ban on single-use plastic bags and a fee on all other carryout bags, including paper bags. This is the approach taken in Part H of S. 1508-B, the Senate's one-house Environmental Conservation Article VII budget bill. It is also the approach taken by A. 5753, sponsored by Assembly Environmental Conservation Committee Chair Steve Englebright and 49 other members of the Assembly.

Plastic bag bans, while admirable in intent, rarely succeed in reducing bag waste. A New York State Department of Environmental Conservation survey of 13 communities with plastic bag laws in New York found that those policies that did not include a fee on paper bags saw an increase in their use. First, retailers in many jurisdictions that have taken a ban-only approach simply switched to thicker plastic bags that could legally be considered "reusable" but were in fact single-use. Second, switching from plastic to paper creates different environmental issues. Compared to plastic, paper bags are more carbon-intensive to produce and much heavier, therefore requiring more truck trips to deliver the same number of bags to stores. Paper bags are also water-intensive to manufacture - not to mention they create a greater volume of solid waste. Placing a fee on all carryout bags that are not explicitly banned addresses both of the concerns with the ban-only approach.

Banning thin plastic bags and placing a fee on all other carryout bags is the gold standard policy for addressing carryout bag waste. This is a policy that is already in place and successful in many jurisdictions across the country, including in peer states like California. We urge you to make 2019 the year that New York State, a national leader on so many environmental issues, finally addresses the scourge of bag waste by banning plastic bags and placing a fee on all other carryout bags.

Thank you,

Riverkeeper

New York League of Conservation Voters

Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter

PlasticBagLaws.com

Environmental Advocates of New York

Citizens Campaign for the Environment

Natural Resources Defense Council

New York Public Interest Research Group

The Nature Conservancy New York

cc:

Honorable John Flanagan, Minority Leader

Honorable Brian Kolb, Minority Leader

Honorable Todd Kaminsky, Chair, Senate Environmental Conservation Committee

Honorable Steven Englebright, Chair, Assembly Environmental Conservation Committee

Honorable Liz Krueger, Chair, Senate Finance Committee

Honorable Helene E. Weinstein, Chair, Assembly Ways and Means Committee