

March, 3, 2015

Dear Mayor Bill de Blasio,

We, the undersigned organizations, strongly support Int. No. 209-2014, which will dramatically reduce pollution and waste by requiring stores in New York City to charge ten cents, to be retained by the retailer, for all carryout bags (paper or plastic) provided at the register. We urge you to support and the City Council to pass this legislation by Earth Day, April 22, 2015.

The proposed legislation has multiple benefits for NYC and its residents. If we are to achieve an 80% reduction in greenhouse-gas emissions by 2050, as promised by Mayor Bill de Blasio, measures like Int. No. 209 are critical. Single-use plastic bags are derived from petroleum and their production, transportation and disposal contribute to climate change. Similarly, paper bags are more costly to retailers, they cost money to recycle and they add to the city's waste. The proposed legislation will improve neighborhood environmental quality, counteract climate impacts, and reduce city government and private business litter clean-up costs.

At the City Council's Committee on Sanitation & Solid Waste Management's November 19, 2014 hearing on this bill, Sanitation Commissioner Kathryn Garcia stated:

New Yorkers use and discard a staggering 10 billion single-use carryout bags annually. For this reason, the Department has historically been a proponent of meaningful single-use carryout bag reform and, more particularly, recycling and waste prevention measures designed to divert materials from New York City's waste stream. As for single-use plastic carry-out bags, there is a very limited market for plastic bag recycling in the United States. On average, the Department collects more than 1,700 tons of single-use carry-out bags per week - which equates to 91,000 tons of plastic and paper carry-out bags each year, and presently costs the City \$12.5 million annually to dispose of this material outside the City.

Single-use plastic bags are akin to another single-use product that the City has recently tackled: polystyrene foam (EPS) food and beverage containers. Both products are environmentally harmful, so light and aerodynamic that they are extraordinarily litter-prone, and lack effective recycling markets. And because the existing program is so inconvenient, most New Yorkers are not returning their used bags to participating retail stores, making the City's current voluntary plastic bag take-back program ineffective. When they end up as litter, plastic bags pollute beaches, parks, street trees and neighborhoods—harming wildlife and impacting the quality of life of all New Yorkers.

After the City's recent determination to get polystyrene foam out of the City's waste stream, the next logical step is to address single-use bags by adopting Int. No. 209. This proposal incorporates the "best practices" learned from other jurisdictions that have implemented similar measures: per-bag charges have proven to be the most effective way to decrease single-use bag consumption. While Int. No. 209 exempts some businesses such as restaurants from charging the fee, and exempts certain consumers such as those paying with food stamps from paying the fee, all households, including those of modest means can avoid the fee by using reusable bags at the checkout counter. As Commissioner Garcia noted in her testimony to the Sanitation Committee: "The strategy for reducing single-use carryout bags contemplated by this legislation focuses not only on bag reduction but also promotes responsible reuse that could help decrease the City's costs to dispose of carryout bags, and minimize street litter and water pollution." That is, the proposed fee raises awareness of critical issues, while leaving the decision to act to consumers. All New Yorkers can avoid the fee altogether and help to make a greener, cleaner city by using a reusable bag.

To date, 210 municipalities in the United States, spanning eighteen states and the District of Columbia, have adopted bans on plastic bags and/or charges for other bags provided at the register. Places that have

enacted per-bag charges have seen 60-90% reductions in the number of bags used. At the City Council's November 19th hearing, the Director of the Department of the Environment in Washington, D.C., Keith Anderson, testified that the imposition of a bag fee in that jurisdiction has resulted in a drastic reduction in single use bag usage and that support for the program was strong across all income groups. Nine local jurisdictions across New York State have already adopted bans on plastic bags, from East Hampton, to Larchmont and Mamaroneck. On January 1, 2015 Hastings-on-Hudson became the latest municipality in the New York region to prohibit both single-use plastic bags and foam food containers. And Dallas, Texas, also implemented its 5-cent charge on all carryout bags on January 1st of this year. It is time for NYC to take the next step towards sustainability.

The proposed legislation – Int. No. 209 – makes economic, social and environmental sense and is consistent, as drafted, with this administration's progressive goals. We respectfully urge you to support this legislation and work with the City Council to take action by Earth Day, April 22, 2015.

Sincerely,

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no impact project

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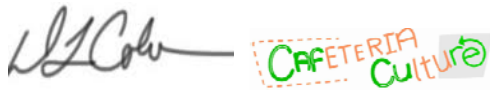
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Mark Dunlea
President
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Jeff Twine
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