

BY HAND

March 9, 2018

Governor Cuomo
Executive Chamber
Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12234

Senate Majority Leader Flanagan
Capitol Building
Room 330
Albany, NY 12247

Senate Co-Leader Klein
Legislative Office Bldg.
Room 913
Albany, NY 12247

Sen. Min. Leader Stewart-Cousins
Legislative Office Bldg.
Room 907
Albany, NY 12247

Assembly Speaker Heastie
Legislative Office Bldg.
Room 932
Albany, NY 12248

Assm. Min. Leader Kolb
Legislative Office Bldg.
Room 933
Albany, NY 12248

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

Citizens Committee for New York City
New York

Citizens for Clean Water
Brackney

Citizens For Water
New York City

Clean and Healthy New York
Albany

Cleanup North Brooklyn
Brooklyn

ClientEarth US
New York

Climate Reality NYC Metro Chapter
New York City

ClimateMama
New York

Coalition Against Pilgrim Pipelines--New York
Saugerties

Coalition Against the Rockaway Pipeline
New York

Coalition to Protect New York
Spencer

Coalition to Save Hempstead Harbor
Sea Cliff

Coastal Preservation Network
College Point

CodePink LI, Women for Peace
Northport

Coxsackie Earthday
Coxsackie

Creative Jazz Organization, Inc.
Cambria Heights

Croton Climate initiative
Croton

Curtis HS Environmental Club
Staten Island

Damascus Citizens for Sustainability
Callicoon

Dancewave Inc.
Brooklyn

Dawn Gallagher Global Good
New York

Dean Street Block Association
Brooklyn

Dept. of Small Interventions
Brooklyn

Dryden Resource Awareness Coalition
Dryden

Earth Day Initiative
New York

East Coast Center for Research & Learning
Elmhurst

East New York 4 Gardens Inc
Brooklyn

Eco-Poetry.org (Environmental Literature & Alerts)
Brooklyn

ELCA
New York

Elders Climate Action
Albany

Empire State Consumer Project
Rochester

Empire State Indivisible
NYC

Environmental Advocates
Albany

Environmental Justice Task Force
Buffalo

Fashiondex Inc.
NY

Federated Blocks of Laurelton
Laurelton

Food & Water Watch
Brooklyn

Fossil Free Tompkins
Brooktondale

Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement
Garrison

Friends of Bushwick Inlet Park
Brooklyn

Friends of Inwood Hill Park
New York

Friends of Transmitter Park
Brooklyn

Gas Free Seneca
Watkins Glen

GoGreenNY
Ithaca

Grassroots Environmental Education
Port Washington

Greater New York Labor Religion Coalition
New York

Greater NYC for Change
New York

Green Education and Legal Fund
Poestenkill

Green Guerillas
New York

Green Map System
New York

Green Oasis / Gilbert's Community Garden
New York

Green Park Gardeners NYC
New York

Green Party of NY
Brooklyn

Green Schools Alliance
New York

Greening USA
Liverpool

Guardians of Flushing Bay
Queens

Harlem Climate Caucus
NYC

Harlem Transformation Project
Manhattan

Hazon
NYC

Hunger Action Network of NYS
Albany

iEat Green, LLC
Old Westbury

Inwood Sprouts
New York City

Jardin La Roca Community Garden
Bronx

Kaddra Farm Inc
Staten Island

Kiddie Science
Brooklyn

Little People's Academy Day Care Center
Brooklyn

Long Beach Environmental Advisory Board
Long Beach

Lower East Side Ecology Center
New York

Manhattan Solid Waste Advisory Board (MSWAB)
New York

Marbletown Environmental Conservation
Commission
Marbletown

Melrose New Generation Community Garden
Bronx

Metro New York Catholic Climate Movement
New York City

MOVE INC
Brooklyn

NYC Friends of Clearwater
Brooklyn

Nakorwa
New Rochelle

NYC H2O
NYC

Napela
Staten Island

Operation SPLASH
Freeport

National Wildlife Federation, NYC Eco-Schools
New York

OWS Special Projects Affinity Group
New York

Natural Resources Defense Council
NYC

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

Neighbors Allied for Good Growth
Brooklyn

PAUSE - People of Albany United for Safe Energy
Albany

Neighbors of the Onondaga Nation
Syracuse

Peacemakers of Schoharie County
Summit

New Paltz Climate Action
New Paltz

People Not Pipelines
Sidney

New York Lawyers for the Public Interest
New York

People's Climate Movement - Capital Region
Albany

New York League of Conservation Voters
New York

Plasticbaglaws.org
New York

New York Public Interest Research Group
New York

Pluma Poetica del Arte, Inc.
New York

New York Society for Ethical Culture
New York City

Plymouth Friends for Clean Water
South Plymouth

Newtown Creek Alliance
Brooklyn

Protecting Our Waters
Stone Ridge

NMPP (Northern Manhattan Perinatal Partnership)
New York

PS10 Water Dreamers
Brooklyn

North American Climate, Conservation and
Environment (NACCE)
Roosevelt

PS 10 Zero Waste/Green Team
Brooklyn

North Country 350 Alliance
Colton

Q Gardens Community Farm
Brooklyn

NY Buddhist Climate Action Network
New York

Quaker Earthcare, Ithaca Monthly Meeting
Ithaca

NY/NJ Baykeeper
Matawan

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