

Good afternoon Chairman Young, Vice Chairman Riedel, Ranking Member Lepore-Hagan and members of the Committee:

Thank you for letting me comment on House Bill 625. My name is Emma Hartlaub, I am a student at Cleveland State University, and I am writing to express my concern regarding this bill. House Bill 625 would authorize and regulate the use of auxiliary containers such as plastic shopping bags, carryout boxes, and any other single use storage containers. Not only would this legislation have a major environmental impact by increasing the amount of solid waste in our communities, but it also would infringe on Ohio's principle of home rule, which allows local governments dictation over local issues, regardless of the state's laws.

As an environmentally conscious student in the Cleveland community, this is very concerning to me. Preserving Ohio's natural beauty is something that I feel very strongly about. I hold a leadership position in a volunteer organization at my university and through this group I plan local service days for students to attend during the school year. Many of my service projects are environmentally based. Through my experiences and connections, I have seen so many opportunities for street and park land clean-ups. The amount of litter and waste that exists right now is troubling enough, I cannot imagine how pollution will increase if this Bill is passed. This not only applies to my community, it affects every town in Ohio. Unnecessary amounts of trash has a detrimental large scale environmental impact, but it also degrades the quality of life and appeal of our own local neighborhoods.

The Average American uses 500 plastic bags a year, and only 5% of these bags are recycled. Those that are not recycled or reused either make it into a landfill, where a bag could remain for 1,000 years, or end up in the ocean. By the year 2050, the Ocean Conservancy predicts there will be more plastic than fish by weight in the world's oceans. Not only is this amount of waste detrimental to wildlife and their habitats, but the toxins from these plastics will enter the food chain and form an even greater risk for wildlife and human health. This single-use plastic waste problem needs to be stopped to preserve the Earth's health, and ultimately human health. Many businesses have already started to eliminate single-use plastic bags from their stores to protect future generations and promote more sustainable practices. Why can't Ohio do the same?

According to the Ohio EPA, the state only has 40 years of waste disposal capacity. This is not a lot of time, so it is critical that Ohio communities are given the opportunity to take action to resolve this waste problem, more specifically with single-use plastics. House Bill 625 would forbid cities and counties from creating significant solutions for dealing with these problems. In fact, it is primarily local entities that enable solid waste reduction efforts and make a difference in this area. It is necessary that local governments retain the power to govern themselves and determine how best to solve the problem of plastic pollution. Our communities deserve to have a say in what is happening in their own backyard. Our citizens deserve the right to control their own community's solid waste management.

Thank you for reading my testimony,

Emma Hartlaub