

November 26, 2018
Honorable Ron Young, Chairman
House Economic Development, Commerce, and Labor Committee
1 Capitol Square
Columbus, OH 43215
Transmitted via electronic mail
RE: Oppose HB 625

Dear Chairman Young, Vice Chairman Riedel, Ranking Member Lepore-Hagan and Members of the House Economic Development, Commerce, and Labor Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on House Bill 625. Please accept these comments on behalf of myself, a resident of Cleveland's Collinwood neighborhood on the shores of Lake Erie. As a committed volunteer in my community, I have participated in dozens of street and beach cleanups for over a decade, keeping trash out of our sewers, waterways and ultimately our Great Lake. Single use plastic is a huge problem in my community, clogging sewers, covering our beaches, impacting the health of fish, birds, and other aquatic life. As proposed, this bill would prohibit municipal corporations, charter government counties, and townships from exercising home rule authority to regulate through fees or taxes commonly littered and wasteful single-use items such as carryout bags, bottles, cans, cups, foam takeout containers, and straws.

Prohibiting local governments from enacting fee ordinances to curb the distribution and use of these containers ties their hands from being able to meaningfully address the litter of such items, especially considering that the state proposes no such uniform action. "Auxiliary containers" as defined by the bill constitute 7 of the top 10 categories of items collected during the 2016 International Coastal Cleanup Day, including plastic beverage bottles (#2 most prolific at 1,578,834 collected); plastic bottle caps (#3 most prolific at 822,227); food wrappers (#4 most prolific at 762,353 collected); plastic grocery bags (#5 at 520,900 collected); plastic straws/stirrers (#7 at 409,087 collected); glass beverage bottles (#8 at 390,468 collected); and foam takeout containers (#10 at 365,584 collected). The numbers for my neighborhood beach, Euclid Beach Park at the 2016 International Coastal Cleanup were equally staggering – with 1,692 single use plastic items recovered in a single cleanup (plastic bottle caps, food wrappers, grocery bags, plastic straws, foam takeout containers). Source - <http://greatlakesadopt.org/Home/HistoricalData>

These staggering figures demonstrate a clear problem: auxiliary containers are among the most commonly found items littered on our coasts. Current litter and recycling laws have not been successful at preventing this waste from ending up in our environment and communities. This litter has a cost in terms of dollars and also quality of life for the communities that are impacted. Further action is required. A number of governments at all levels – national, state, county, and municipal – have taken action to reduce litter by enacting bans, fees, or a combination of bans and fees, on various "auxiliary containers." Entire countries like China, India, and Ireland have carryout bag regulations. States, counties and cities in the United States have taken action as well, from bans on plastic bags and foam takeout containers in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina on the east coast to a statewide plastic bag ban effective for all islands in the state of Hawai'i in the far west. Even in Texas, 7 local governments from the liberal Austin to the decidedly conservative Kermit have a ban, fee, or

combination regulation on carryout bags.² For fee-based regulations, some governments have opted to allow for a portion of the fee to remain with the retailer, to allow for cost recovery for any increases in cost associated with increases in paper bag distribution.

In the absence of such a proposal to institute fee-based regulation or bans at the state level, I strongly support the liberty and authority of local governments to determine the best way to reduce and prevent problem litter in their communities. For these reasons, I oppose the language in House Bill 625 that would preempt local government regulation of “auxiliary containers,” and furthermore opposes efforts by the state to overreach and prevent litter abatement efforts by local government, and respectfully asks that committee members vote no on the bill.

Sincerely,
Stephen Love,
Resident,
4 Villa Beach,
Cleveland, OH 44110