



Sierra Club Ohio Chapter  
131 N. High Street, Ste. 605  
Columbus, OH 43215

November 26, 2018

RE: House Bill 625

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

My name is Elissa Yoder Mann, I am a Conservation Manager for the Ohio Chapter Sierra Club, and I represent 25,000 members here in Ohio. I would like to discuss Ohio House Bill 625 with you. HB 625 aims to suppress the power of local government; it prevents cities from placing a fee on items like single-use carryout bags or bottles.

Local communities pass policies to help their local businesses thrive and create an economy that works for the people who live there. When state legislators prevent local communities from passing laws, they threaten local democracy, silence the voices of the people, and hinder economic growth and development. A broad brush approach dictated by the state will not be successful in solving a local problem.

The Ohio EPA Solid Waste Management Council stated that Ohio has only 40 years of available disposal capacity and Ohio must focus its attention on diverting waste. This will only be achieved by ensuring that communities and businesses have opportunities to reduce, reuse, and recycle their solid waste, by diverting waste from entering the landfill. Solid waste reduction efforts are a service primarily provided by local governments and/or local businesses. Cities with successful recycling programs result from a collaboration of many stakeholders including: government entities, business owners, community groups, and local non-profits.

Here in Ohio I have heard from farmers who have cattle and sheep die from in parts to eating plastic bags that blow onto their property, local storm sewers often become blocked with plastic waste, causing sewer backups and standing water in neighborhoods. I heard from the Supervisor of Recreation and Parks that 20% of their employee's time is spent removing plastic waste that gets caught in landscaping equipment. In recycling centers, plastic bags get caught in machine gears, the entire plant has to stop until it is removed. Landfills often have one

employee dedicated to collecting plastic bags and film that fly off their property. In 2015 the Ohio Department of Transportation spent \$4 million in highway litter removal. It is difficult for us to imagine all the ways waste impact cities, and what actions and policies are in place to combat waste.

It is imperative that we preserve the power of municipalities to make decisions and policies on how to best address the needs of their community. Each city may uniquely face waste in different ways, creating a uniform statewide approach to waste will not be effective in reducing waste or empowering citizens to take action.

HB 625 would specifically preclude local governments from enacting legislation that would establish fees to control the distribution of and ensuing waste from single-use “auxiliary containers” used to transport food and beverages, such as plastic carryout shopping bags. This is a direct attack on the principle of home rule - the Ohio Constitution generally authorizes local governments to govern themselves in local matters independent of state law. Local governments will lose the ability to address waste associated with single-use items such as carryout shopping bags, beverage bottles, and foam takeout containers. At least 125 jurisdictions in 22 states have already adopted some form of control over the distribution of single-use carryout bags, and these regulations have been remarkably effective in reducing pollution and waste.

Unfortunately the recycling stations/bins placed at the front of grocery stores (where we all visit regularly) are not working; people do not recycle their bags. The US EPA estimates that less than 5 percent of all plastic bags are returned to the grocery store for recycling. Placing minimal costs on items like carryout bags, have proven to be an effective disincentive that curbs the vast number of bags that are otherwise freely handed out to customers. For example, in Boulder Colorado, a ten cent bag fee on disposable bags reduced use by 68% in only six months. Without these disincentives cities and citizen are left to deal with the burden of plastic waste.

Thank you, to the committee, for your time and hearing my testimony today.

Sincerely,

Elissa Yoder Mann  
Conservation Manger  
Sierra Club - Ohio Chapter  
[elissa.yoder@sierraclub.org](mailto:elissa.yoder@sierraclub.org)  
(614) 484-7021



