



Chairman Wiggam, and honorable members of the State and Local Government Committee:

Thank you for allowing me the time to represent the government of the City of Bexley in testifying regarding the important bill that is before you.

I understand well the concept of creating streamlined regulation for industry in Ohio, and I applaud you for continuing to find ways to responsibly simplify operational complexities in our state. I appreciate that local regulations can complicate compliance for corporations, and I think that, in general, we should be intentional in seeking to avoid an unnecessarily labyrinthine regulatory environment while also respecting the home rule rights of local governments.

So today, let us apply these principles to the cost/benefit analysis of regulating the humble plastic bag.

This plastic bag is a 0.5 mil thick feather-light plastic bag like those in use in grocery stores today in Bexley and throughout Ohio. Is it not innocuous? Are those governments who are trying to regulate this not over-reacting, are we not creating a tempest in a teapot? I am here today to tell you that this is clearly not the case.

I'm sure that you, like I, have taken several tours of public waste management operations. Perhaps you have toured one or more of the regional recycling facilities in

Ohio. If so, I'm sure it was quickly pointed out to you that single use plastic bags are the greatest threat to recycling sorting facilities, chronically clogging up machinery and adding extensively to human labor costs and frustrating efforts towards recycling. Not only are they not able to effectively be sorted and recycled themselves, but they actually act as deterrents to recycling, compromising operations and otherwise recyclable materials in our MRFs.

My own tour of the central Ohio MRF several years ago is what first turned my attention to the plastic bag as a serious issue. Because recycling centers are not able to effectively sort this thin film material, the vast majority of single use plastic bags either end up in landfills, or all too commonly in our natural environment.

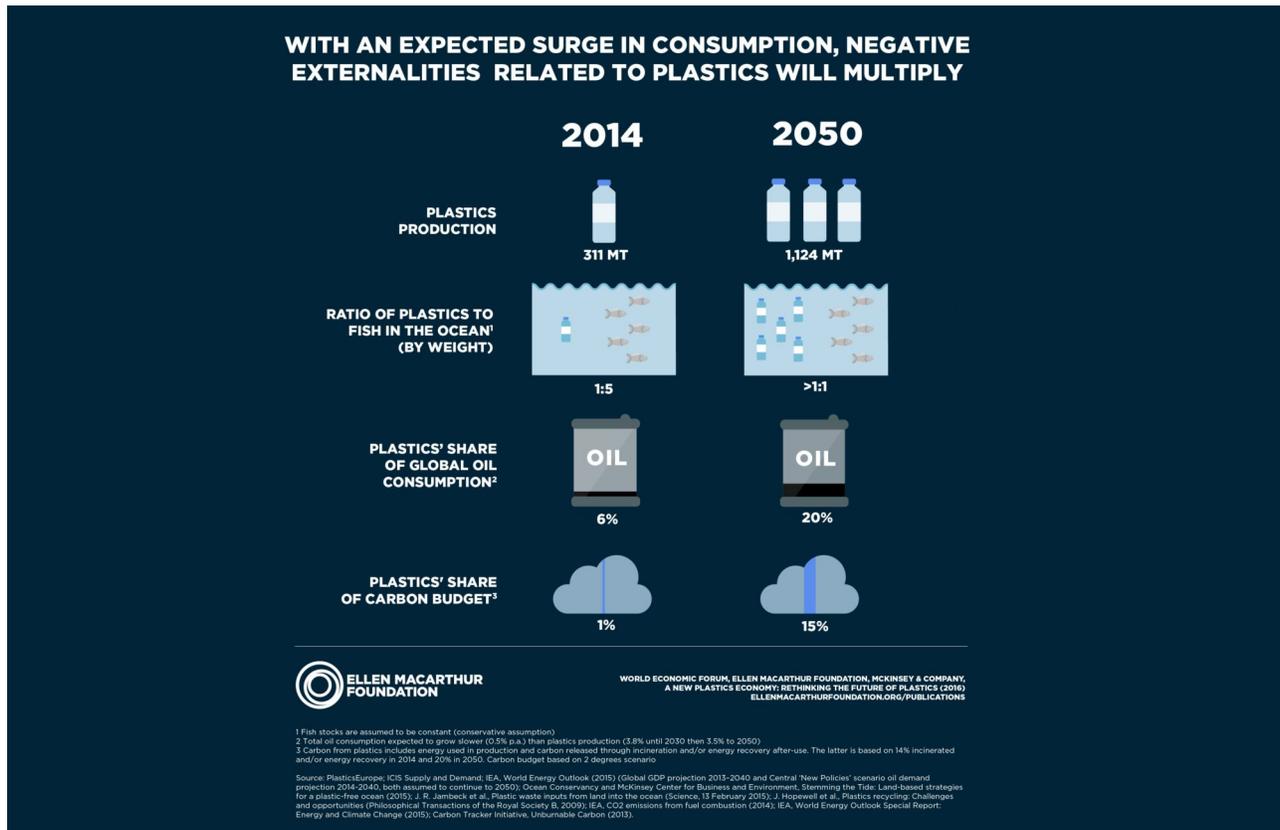
Their thin, lightweight membrane operating as efficient sails, the bags end up as urban tumbleweed, snagged in tree branches, clogging storm drains, littering our yards and parking lots.

We have all, I'm sure, participated in cleanup efforts in our Ohio creeks, rivers, and lakes. Every time I do, I am overwhelmed by the sheer volume of non-degradable plastic waste, much of it in the form of single-use plastic bags tangled in trees and branches both above and below water.

Beyond the local environmental impact of plastic bags, there are larger, global implications to this uniquely problematic pollutant, and Ohio is not removed from them. Our bags have multiple routes to global ocean systems. A Bexley resident recently returned from a trip to the Galapagos Islands, and noted the pervasive presence of plastic bags and micro-plastics on beaches on uninhabited islands within

that world heritage site. Could some of that plastic originated from consumers in Ohio? We are vastly more interconnected than we realize, and it is entirely possible.

Plastic pollution is reaching a crisis point in our oceans, as plastic takes an estimated 1,000 years or more for complete breakdown. According to National Geographic, the Pacific Ocean now plays host to a garbage patch of floating plastic that is estimated to be larger than Texas. Moreover, a World Economic Forum report estimates that by 2050 there will be a higher volume of plastic in our oceans than fish.



This plastic pollution ultimately impacts the entire ecosystem – including us. Plastic breaks down into smaller and smaller particles over time, and eventually ends up in our food and [water](#).

If we continue to produce plastic at current rates, we will increasingly threaten the food security of the approximately 3 billion people who rely on seafood as their primary source for sustenance, not to mention the rest of us, who are also ingesting food from micro-plastic contaminated sources across every food category.

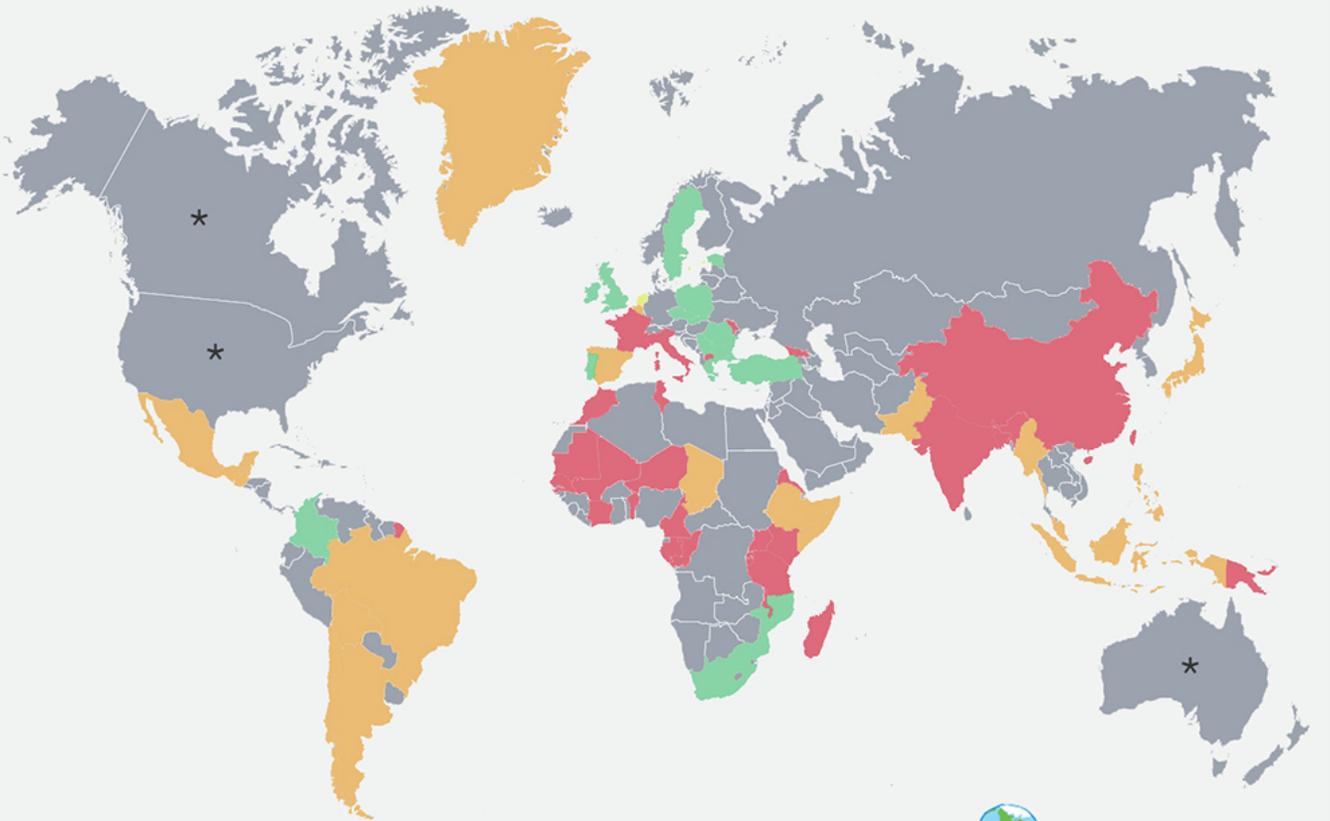
Researchers estimate that Americans consume more than 70,000 particles of micro plastic per year. This number is greater if including inhaled micro-plastics, and will only blossom over time as the bulk of plastic waste in our natural environment stockpiles.

For all of this, plastic bags are only used by consumers - on average - for a mere 12 minutes, before being tossed aside to end up in landfills and natural environments. Note that this average does take into account the small fraction of consumers who re-use their bags prior to disposal.

But it is not all doom and gloom. Governments across the world are taking action. Several states and hundreds of local municipalities in the United States have enacted meaningful bans or limitations. Many countries across the world, including the European Union; China; many African, Asian, and South American countries; and soon Canada, have enacted such bans.

Where are plastic bags banned or taxed around the world?

■ Plastic bags banned ■ Plastic bags taxed ■ Partial ban or tax



Data via Wikipedia; assembled by ReuseThisBag.com

*Note: Bans/taxes exist in certain states and provinces in the U.S., Canada, and Australia



(note: not updated to reflect EU ban or pending Canadian ban)

To join these efforts would place Ohio proactively, proudly, and positively on the right side of history, helping to combat the local and global environmental crises of plastics and micro-plastics contamination.

The really good news is that this is one of those rare regulatory changes that costs very little, if properly crafted, for consumers and businesses, yet carries with it a significant benefit to virtually every sector of our human population and natural resources.

Instead of expending time and energy on pre-empting a local jurisdiction's right to self governance - to expressing its own unique and cherished community values - I urge this body to join thousands of governments around the world in helping to curb an environmental crisis. If not, then lead by celebrating local governments who are taking innovative steps to solve the problem.

Take Bexley. In our City, we worked closely with the largest distributors of single use plastic bags, and came up with a joint solution that was agreeable to our business partners, and will meaningfully improve the urban tumbleweed of plastic bags and the resultant negative impact to our waterways, wildlife, food stream, and human health. Moreover, Bexley's solution incentivizes consumers to bring their own reusable bags, and ultimately leads to a lowering of costs for our grocery and other retailers.

Local ordinances like ours provide a valuable testing ground for innovative approaches to critical environmental issues such as those facing communities throughout the world.

In the scope of the global environment, Ohio is small, and Bexley is even smaller - we know this. But small steps, taken with a long view, can make a dramatic difference. I urge the State of Ohio to join your local, national, and international peers who are

active in abating this crisis. Join us, and let us all benefit by taking the long view together.

With these thoughts in mind, House Bill 242 is exactly the wrong approach to take at a time when Ohio's residents and natural environment desperately need your leadership on this important issue. There's a better solution. It's responsible, financially feasible, and easily enacted. It is a step that this legislative body can take, and what a wonderful step it would be.

Thank you, Chairman Wiggam and Honored Representatives, for your time, your consideration, and your passion for a thriving and sustainable Ohio.