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State and Local Government Committee
Scott Wiggam, Chair

Please vote no on HB 242 which would prohibit communities from placing local fees on single-use containers.

Taxpayers often know what's best for their local communities. Single use containers such as plastic bags clog up farmlands, storm drains & sewers, and release toxins into the air and water when they are incinerated and landfilled. Taxpayers must pick up the tab for cleanup of escalating single-use pollution. For example, the California state government spends roughly \$428 million annually to control litter before it reaches state waters. Preemption laws infringe upon municipal Home Rule as well as regulation rights concerning the protection of health, safety, and the power to regulate waste.

Here are some reasons single-use waste is gravely harming Ohioans:

1. Pollution on land and in our lakes, rivers and streams from single-use containers of all kinds threaten our farms & fisheries, our marine and recreational industries as well as wildlife and human safety. The estimated 6 trillion pieces of plastic choking our oceans injure and kill fish and wildlife through ingestion and entanglement and bio-accumulate up the food chain, threatening our health. By weight, there will be more plastic than fish in the ocean by 2050. Communities suffering economic and/or health and safety related distress must have the right to try to limit these problems through local ordinances.
2. Plastic fibers have now been found in most samples of public drinking water nationwide, the result of the breakdown of plastic pollution in surface water. These fibers attract and hold onto toxic chemicals. If you are drinking water right now, you are likely ingesting minute plastic particles containing toxics. Communities wanting to maintain safe drinking water supplies should have the right to limit plastic pollution caused by single use plastic containers.
3. It is often said that local governments are the laboratories of democracy. Home Rule allows localities to try out innovative policies (e.g. methods of reducing pollution & waste) on a small scale to discover which ones are most effective.

Recycling, though a useful tool, is insufficient to overcome the grave threat of plastic proliferation on our lands and water. Recycling markets such as China are drying up, and many types of plastics are non-recyclable. According to the Ohio EPA Solid Waste Council, Ohio has only 40 years of solid waste disposal capacity remaining, so communities must prioritize waste reduction.

4. Plastic bag, straw, and polystyrene foam ordinances have been passed in over 300 U.S. cities and a few states. Legislative action to restrict single-use plastic distribution has proved to be an effective way to decrease plastic pollution. Local plastic bag fees and bans have proven effective in cutting litter, reducing taxpayer costs and improving overall recycling because plastic bags harm municipal recycling systems by clogging machines.

5. Plastics industry trade associations (e.g. American Chemical Council) spend millions of dollars a year trying to defeat state legislation and local ordinances to limit use of plastics, and to convince policymakers and the public that the answer is to recycle more. Yet National Geographic reported (December 2018) that only 9% of plastics are being recycled. We know that this legislation is being proposed and pushed by entities associated with the gas and oil industry, and is related to “cracker plants” being built to service the shale gas plays in Ohio and adjacent states.

The natural gas industry would like plastics manufacturers nearby to buy their product, and some Ohio government entities have bought into this idea as a boon for Ohio's economy. A closer look reveals it will contribute to future disasters for Ohio's economy. We know that methane emissions from natural gas are 35 times better at trapping heat in the atmosphere than is CO₂ (methane is 87 times worse as a GHG over 20 years) and are a major contributor to climate change. A recent NOAA report (chicagotribune.com), vetted by 13 government agencies and collectively written by 300 scientists, projects that the Midwest's agricultural economy will be hit especially hard by climate change, and will start a precipitous economic downturn caused by extreme high rainfall events and high temperatures that will result in more frequent and severe storms, a greater incidence of crop disease, increasing pest damage, wilting crops from extreme heat, diminished yields, soil erosion, storm water systems being overwhelmed, and diminished air quality, which will impact folks with respiratory diseases. It will fall to the local communities to finance the necessary mitigation to protect themselves from climate disasters. Therefore, local communities should have the power to help prevent the escalation of extreme climate events by enacting ordinances that may help them become more resilient.

It's time to implement real solutions to plastic pollution, particularly the reduction of single-use plastics in “on-the-go” situations that have the highest likelihood of polluting

our environment. There are many safer alternatives to single-use plastics. Communities can educate their constituents and businesses about alternatives.

Please oppose HB 242.

Thank you,

Ruth Hardy