

Testimony on Senate Bill 222
Local Government, Public Safety and Veterans Affairs Committee
Sen. Michael Rulli, Sponsor

Submitted by:

Deborah K. Cooper

Thank you, Sen. Rulli, co-sponsors and committee members, for allowing me to submit this testimony on House Bill 178.

I am a private citizen who believes that Senate Bill 178 will not only harm our state by allowing single-use plastics to proliferate, but also sets a dangerous precedent by restricting the authority of local government officials and communities to tax themselves in order to address pollution and waste concerns. Ohio is a home-rule state, but SB 222 would threaten local democracy and violate our state's constitution.

It doesn't take a scientist to see the effects of our refusal to seriously address pollution and waste. According to the Ohio EPA Solid Waste Management Council, Ohio has only 35.9 years of available disposal capacity. While recycling programs can be helpful, there must be markets for recycled materials, and even our best recycling efforts are not sufficient to significantly reduce the amount of landfill waste. Further, China will likely no longer accept waste imports within the next year. We are simply running out of room and time, and while we stockpile plastics, we continue to add dangerous toxins to our planet.

Our continuing use of plastic bags and other single-use plastics is simply not sustainable. The Ocean Conservancy has estimated that, by 2050, there will be more plastic than fish by weight in the world's oceans. We already know that fish and marine mammals are ingesting plastics. Not only are these plastics harming and killing these creatures, but we are eating those toxic fish. In addition, every year, plastics kill one million seabirds, 100,000 turtles, and 400,000 mammals. Ingested plastic bags block these creatures' digestive systems and keep them from eating nutritious foods. We've all seen pictures of animals being weighed down, suffocated, or drowned due to their entanglement with various forms of plastic.

Bags and other disposable plastics that remain on land will not degrade for at least 1,000 years. I shudder to think of what my grandchildren's future will look like if we fail to address this situation immediately. The thought that our legislators are not only ignoring this serious problem, but want to prevent others from addressing it as well, is extremely disturbing. Perhaps those who support SB 222 don't mind passing along a toxic, unsustainable planet to their grandchildren, but I'm guessing that the majority of Ohioans would like to pass on a better legacy.

When I was a child, I lived near Cleveland, just a few blocks from Lake Erie. We couldn't swim in the lake because it was too polluted. After years of cleanup efforts, pollution was greatly reduced, which was wonderful to see. I also remember when the Cuyahoga River burned, and the many jokes that followed, and recall being shocked that industry was allowed to endanger the community in such an obvious way.

I wish we could depend on industries to police themselves and to do what is best for the

environment, but we have seen, time and time again, that they tend to operate for short-term financial gain regardless of the longer-term consequences. Back in the 60s, we could, perhaps, pretend we didn't understand the effects of pollutants on our environment. Now we have no excuse and we are running out of time to save our planet.

If Ohio legislators are not moved to address the environmental crises in our state and the world, then, at the very least, they should move out of the way so that those who do care can work to make the changes needed for the sustainability of our state and our world.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my concerns.

Sincerely,

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