



May 14, 2018

Re: SB210

Good afternoon Chairman Burke, Vice Chairman Beagle, Ranking Member Tavares and members of the Committee:

We are five high school students from St. Francis DeSales High School located in Columbus. We have concerns about the lack of attention to the amount of plastic litter in our local communities. Every year, the petrochemical industry produces a total 380 billion plastic bags and wraps in the US. This results in billions of pounds of solid waste and several million cubic tons of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere as a result of manufacturing. Here in Ohio, you can see the evidence of litter just by driving down the road. You can see plastic bags shifting in the wind, plastic bottles on the side of the street, and disposable food containers clogging our storm drains. We have chosen to take action on this issue in order to bring the voice of the youth to this conversation.

The use of plastic bags is widespread, every American consumes an average of 500 plastic bags per year. Yet, only 5% of plastic bags get recycled. The remainder of these bags are found in our environment and piling up in our landfills.

The Ocean Conservancy states plastics are believed to threaten at least 600 different wildlife species. Wildlife are often the first to come into contact with plastic debris due to our neglectful habits. Animals who swallow plastic bags often have intestinal obstructions which typically leads to a slow painful death. Animals can also be poisoned by the chemicals which are used to make the bag. Our soil for example, absorbs the toxins litter creates and affects plants and crops. Animals then eat those crops that live in the soil and may become sick. Humans who eat either the crops or the animals feeding on the infected agriculture can also become ill.

When plastic bags are carried by the wind, they end up in our streams. The bags then find their way to the sewers. While in the sewers, the bags clump up with other debris and form blockages that may decrease water flow. This can lead to flooding in neighborhoods and sewage backup in residential homes. Clogged pipes can starve local wetlands and streams of water supply and lead to massive die-offs, or total collapses.

Once plastic bags are in local waterways, they move downstream, eventually finding their way to the ocean. They get caught in ocean currents called gyres which hold the plastics in large patches. It is estimated the Atlantic Ocean gyre is the size of Texas, but is difficult to accurately determine because 80% of the waste is below the surface of the ocean.

Every year, more than 8 million tons of plastic waste leaks into the ocean. A recent study by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation and the World Economic Forum states that one dump truck full of plastic enters the ocean every minute. According to the Ocean Conservancy, by the year 2050 there will be more plastic by weight than fish in the ocean. Thousands of marine animals choke and die from ingesting this plastic. Approximately one million seabirds are killed by marine litter every year. 100,000 turtles, dolphins, whales, and seals, are killed by plastic marine litter every year. This is mostly due to the fact that plastic bags are not biodegradable, instead they photodegrade. Photodegradation means that the plastic is broken down by sunlight, so it never goes away, it just is broken into smaller pieces. Toxins are easily absorbed into the plastic, creating a poison in our ocean. Marine life mistake these bits of plastic for plankton and other food and consume the plastic. Once the plastic is consumed by fish, toxins and plastic enter the human food chain.

Nationwide, litter cleanup efforts result in as much as \$11 billion per year. It costs cities an estimated 30 cents to clean up each piece of litter from the environment. For example, the city of San Francisco was spending \$8.4 million per year to remove waste until a plastic bag ban was placed. One year after San Jose, California adopted an ordinance regulating single-use disposable bags, the city reported that storm drains were nearly 90 percent cleaner.

Here in Ohio; the Department of Transportation spent \$4 million dollars on highway cleanup and litter removal in 2015. 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. Cities with successful recycling programs result from a collaboration of many stakeholders including businesses, cities, counties, and townships. SB210 would prohibit local municipalities from creating their own solutions to waste.

Our future is looking grim due to the consequences of plastic pollution. Wildlife will continue to die, our waterways will be unsuitable for recreation, and our lakes could become unswimmable. As young people, we are working to educate our generation on this topic and take action. We are inheriting an Earth that is literally overflowing with plastic. It will be our generation and beyond who will need to address the consequences of plastic pollution. We urge you to reject SB210, allow municipalities to address waste, and create a clean earth for future generations.

Sincerely,

Senior High School Students, Class of 2018

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