

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

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to discuss this important issue for local communities. My name is Nicole Tabit, an OSU Student and Clean Water Campaign Intern at The Ohio Chapter Sierra Club. The Sierra Club is an organization that fights for the rights of the environment and targets the most pressing issues that face our environment and communities. In that, we concern ourselves both with present day concerns and action, while keeping an eye towards the future of our environment and economy.

One of those issues is the amount of pollution in our local communities that comes from single use containers, especially plastic bags, water bottles, and styrofoam containers. Plastic takes thousands of years to decompose, and styrofoam never does, creating a destructive pile-up of waste that is difficult but imperative to combat. Even with increased public education and accessible recycling, these products are completely wasteful, as the materials that make them up are harmful to extract from the environment, and the byproduct left after their production is equally harmful. After their use, these products are often thrown away, and can end up on the streets and in the waterways - effectively choking the environment and surrounding community. To bring this point home, in our own state, plastic accounts for approximately 80 percent of the litter on the shorelines of the Great Lakes, and Lake Erie receives 2500 metric tons of plastic pollution annually.

To fight this problem, many cities across the United States are taking action into their own hands. Discouraging the use of disposable containers reduces waste, saving money on solid waste disposal fees, recyclables processing, wastewater treatment, storm drain cleaning, and street sweeping. To achieve these results, many communities have imposed a fee, tax, or ban on single-use containers to decrease waste volume, and have experienced positive environmental and economic results. For example, 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 than the year prior.

Even past these environmental concerns, single-use containers can also create an economic burden for cities who are the ones left to remove the waste. As with anything "free," we tend to

take advantage of the ready supply of plastic bags without considering the indirect costs. Grocers and other retail companies, both corporate and small businesses, can spend up to \$1,500 to \$6,000 a month just to provide single-use bags to their customers at the check-out. By lowering these operating costs, business can afford to hire more employees or contribute to more long term capital expenditures. This decreased burden will also positively impact consumers currently paying the hidden cost of disposable containers. A fee for bags is a free market solution to this problem. A long term and sustainable solution is to use reusable shopping bags, which are fairly inexpensive, and unlike a plastic bag, last for many years.

I encourage all attendees to read the extraordinarily comprehensive Equinox Center report titled “Plastic Bag Bans: Analysis of Economic and Environmental Impacts” for more information on this issue and the effectiveness of the solutions I have outlined so far.

- (suggestions: supply hard copies when at hearing)

Beyond these tangible impacts, perhaps most troubling is that SB 210 would set a dangerous precedent in our state in regards to local “home rule” environmental issues. An enlightening statement from House Speaker Paul Ryan reads that: “Government closest to the people governs best.” Predatory preemptive state government actions like those found in this bill do nothing but limit the degree to which municipal governments can fully represent themselves and their priorities, effectively snuffing out the voices of the actual stakeholders most affected. The ability to govern ourselves and advocate our own interests within reasonable bounds is a sacred value of American political thought. An overreach such as this bill does nothing to help cities, the state economy, or our damaged environments. It only serves to add more regulation for the sake of regulation, not for the sake of customized beneficial regulations that local governments may want to employ to reduce waste and costs. This ability for municipalities to evaluate, choose, and take action towards the threat of single-use containers or other environmental issues that affect their communities must not be impeded.

In this sense, “Action” is not simply identifying a problem and becoming aware, but also doing your part on your own autonomy in the face of a growing concern. As environmental concerns and damages continue to threaten ourselves and our future generations, I would certainly demand some form of environmental action from ourselves and our governments in most any

circumstance. However, we are faced today with a choice in which the wrong action from our state legislature can stall preemptive efforts from municipalities to act without restriction and protect their own waters, streets, and communities. In this case, I urge the committee to take “No Action” on SB 210 - a bill that puts unnecessary barriers up for local governments to take meaningful environmental action by limiting the cross-generational threat of single use containers.

Thank you to the committee for your consideration, and to the Sierra Club for giving me the opportunity to voice our stance on this measure. We will be happy to take questions and elaborate on this important issue further.

