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LD 69

Dear Members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee,

LD 69's proposed repeal is a serious misstep in our collective journey and responsibility to sustaining life on this planet. The existing restrictions on single-use bags are critical in reducing environmental pollution, conserving resources, and mitigating the harmful effects of plastic waste on ecosystems and human health.

Opponents of plastic bag restrictions often argue that they are inconvenient or economically harmful. However, numerous case studies prove otherwise. In California, where a statewide plastic bag ban took effect in 2016, studies showed a 72% reduction in plastic bag litter within the first year alone [1]. Retailers also reported a seamless transition to reusable bags, with many customers adapting quickly to new norms. Similar trends have been observed in countries like Ireland, which saw a 90% reduction in plastic bag usage after implementing a bag levy [2].

Repealing the restriction on single-use bags would be a regressive step, undermining years of progress in environmental sustainability. Rather than eliminating the law, we should be working to strengthen it, encouraging further reductions in plastic consumption and promoting sustainable alternatives.

Plastic pollution is a crisis that continues to worsen globally. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), over 100 billion plastic bags are used annually in the United States, with less than 10% being recycled [3]. The remainder contributes to landfills, clogs waterways, and harms marine and terrestrial wildlife. A study published in *Science Advances* found that 79% of all plastic ever produced still exists in some form as waste, exacerbating long-term environmental degradation [4].

Single-use plastic bags, in particular, pose significant threats to marine life. The Ocean Conservancy reports that plastic bags are among the top 10 items found in coastal cleanups worldwide [5]. Sea turtles, birds, and other wildlife often mistake them for food, leading to ingestion that causes internal injuries, starvation, and death. Eliminating single-use bags has been proven to reduce plastic pollution in waterways; a study in *Environmental Research Letters* found that cities implementing plastic bag bans saw a 40-60% decrease in plastic bag litter in their environment [6].

Beyond environmental consequences, the financial burden of plastic pollution on municipalities and taxpayers is substantial. The costs of cleaning up plastic litter, maintaining waste management infrastructure, and addressing public health issues related to microplastic contamination add up to millions of dollars annually. Research from the University of California, Davis, indicates that microplastics have infiltrated our food supply, with detectable amounts found in seafood, table salt, and even drinking water [7]. The World Health Organization (WHO) has called for further studies on the potential human health impacts of microplastic ingestion, but early evidence suggests possible links to endocrine disruption, immune system impairment, and other long-term health risks [8].

I urge you to consider the overwhelming scientific evidence, the economic benefits of reducing plastic waste, and the ethical responsibility we hold to future generations. Please vote NO on LD 69 and uphold our commitment to a future, not just today.

Sincerely,

Molly Rahman

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