



NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

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To: Representative Aaron Michlewitz, Chair
Representative Denise C. Garlick, Vice Chair
House Committee on Ways and Means

Cc: Governor Charles Baker
Senator Cynthia Creem
Senator Rebecca Rausch
Representative Alice Peisch
Representative Lori Ehrlich
Senator James Eldridge

July 24, 2019

Re: Support a Strong Statewide Plastic Bag Bill

Dear Chair Michlewitz and Vice Chair Garlick,

In June, the Wellesley Natural Resources Commission wrote our legislators in support of a strong statewide plastic bag bill in Massachusetts, one which included the banning of all plastic checkout bags; a fee on all checkout bags to encourage the use of reusable bags (proven to reduce waste); and the ability of municipalities to write and maintain their own bylaws and ordinances. We were therefore very pleased with House and Senate bills (H.771;S.462), An Act Reducing Plastic Bag Pollution, co-sponsored by Representative Lori Ehrlich and Senator James Eldridge.

We were, however, extremely disappointed to learn that a complete redraft of H.771 emerged from the Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture as H.3945. This redraft allows for the distribution of thicker weight plastic checkout bags, does not include a fee on checkout bags, AND makes existing city ordinances and town bylaws “null and void”.

Wellesley was one of the first 20 municipalities in Massachusetts to regulate single-use plastic checkout bags. Wellesley’s bylaw passed overwhelmingly at our 2016 Annual Town Meeting, has been widely accepted by businesses and residents, and was wholeheartedly endorsed by our Recycling and Disposal Facility, which consistently dealt with lost productivity and revenue due to plastic bags jamming the baling machine. Plastic bag regulations are working in Wellesley and in more than 120 other communities. H.3945 would overturn our town’s hard work and success, and we find this unacceptable.

We are writing to ask the House Ways and Means Committee to reinstate the strong statewide plastic-bag ban as originally proposed, including the checkout bag fee, the prohibition of plastic checkout bags, and the elimination of the pre-emption clause.

The Wellesley Natural Resources Commission would prefer no state-wide plastic bag bill rather than the redrafted bill now before your Committee. We ask for your consideration of these issues during your deliberations.

Sincerely,

Regina LaRocque, Chair
Wellesley Natural Resources Commission