

Before the Senate Commerce Committee
Presented by Zack Pistora, Kansas Sierra Club
Opponent to SB 493
2-17-22



Madam Chair Erickson and Honorable Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong opposition of SB 493; Preempting cities and counties from prohibiting or regulating auxiliary containers such as plastic carryout bags and other single-use plastic items.

SB 493 is a preemption bill that takes away Home Rule and Local Control.

This bill takes away the rights of communities to “own” their decisions in reducing their plastic and single-use materials, etc. This is a violation of the principles of the Kansas Constitution and our democratic freedoms. Communities like Wichita, Lawrence, and Prairie Village, all have an interest in protecting both terrestrial and marine/aquatic life from entanglement in plastic bags and preserving the beauty of their farms, pastures, parks, rivers and streams, and city streets from plastic bag debris and other litter. Our local communities should have the freedom to enact ordinances unique to their concerns without the state meddling unnecessarily in their affairs.

Plastic pollution is a real problem for Kansas, as well as the world. SB 493 moves Kansas in the opposite policy direction.

Single-use plastics are a misuse of precious resources. There is too much single-use plastic tossed out every day - beverage cups and lids, snack wrappings, water bottles and take-out food containers. Studies show that plastic is accumulating quickly in every corner of the natural environment. Plastics don't biodegrade like paper. In fact, plastics break into smaller and smaller bits that eventually show up in our own food chain. Not only does a small percentage of plastic get recycled, but creating plastics takes away from other oil needs.

Styrofoam is another example of an uncontrolled material having significant economic and environmental impacts. The cleanup costs associated with styrofoam include carbon emissions, environmental costs and potential health effects estimated at \$7 billion annually. It takes over hundreds of years for styrofoam to breakdown – nearly all of it ends up in landfills consuming valuable space in the landfill. If not in the landfill, foam ends up in waterways where animals mistake it for food, and just like plastic, when it does eventually break down it is ingested and eventually infiltrates our own food chain.

Americans use and dispose of 100 billion plastic shopping bags each year and at least 12 million barrels of oil are used per year in the manufacture of those plastic bags (Source: Wall Street Journal).

The average American family takes home almost 1,500 plastic shopping bags a year (Source: www.nrdc.org)

This bill does nothing positive as a substitute for local ordinances and until a state program is established to reduce plastic and other single-use waste, we ought to allow our cities the opportunity to try proactive solutions in their community.

Oppose SB 493 to respect home rule and democracy, and we can work toward an alternative, uniform state law on plastic reduction this session.

Sincerely,

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The Sierra Club is the largest grassroots environmental organization dedicated to enjoying, exploring, and protecting our great outdoors. The Kansas Chapter represents our state's strongest grassroots voice on environmental matters for more than forty years.