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Rabbi Moti Rieber, Executive Director
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**Written Testimony in Opposition to SB 493, Single Use Plastic Pre-emption
Senate Commerce Committee, Sen. Renee Erickson, chair
February 17, 2022**

Mme. Chair, Ranking member Holland, members of the committee:

My name is Rabbi Moti Rieber; I am Executive Director of Kansas Interfaith Action, a statewide, multifaith issue advocacy organization that represents mostly Mainline Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities on a variety of important issues. I am also testifying on behalf of the Kansas chapter of Lutherans Restoring Creation, in opposition to SB 493.

The denominations and faith communities that make up Kansas Interfaith Action take, as the very core of our mission, care of God's Creation. Our opposition to this bill is based on three points:

First, the regulation of single use plastic, through either banning it, imposing a cost, or otherwise regulating it, is a sensible and justifiable policy. Cities face an increasing crisis of plastic pollution, most of which comes from the food and beverage industry. They face costs associated with plastic pollution, including extra landfill costs, community clean-up, and jamming of equipment or infrastructure.

Over 200 counties and municipalities have enacted ordinances either imposing a fee on single use plastic or banning it outright. Several countries, such as France and India, have done so as well. They are responding a real need, and our Kansas municipalities should not be prevented from responding to that same need.

The second reason we oppose this bill is on the process, or the precedent. The Kansas Constitution states that "Powers and authority granted cities pursuant to this section shall be liberally construed for the purpose of giving to cities the largest measure of self-government." Communities should be allowed to voluntarily decide what's right for themselves rather than by State mandate from those that don't live there. It's all too easy for the legislature to preempt home rule, but the convenience of the plastics or restaurant industries is not a compelling enough reason to overrule this core constitutional principle.

And third: It is nearly impossible in the Kansas legislature to develop policy, or even to have a conversation about, environmental policy. There are no committees dedicated to addressing these issues; the only germane committees, so to speak, are commodity committees like agriculture or utilities – or in this case, commerce. So when Kansas citizens, in their local communities, do the difficult work of organizing and convincing their municipalities to address the relatively low-hanging fruit of single use plastic, industry groups fueled by fossil fuel money come to the legislature to preempt it. It's anti-democratic as well as anti-environmental.

Single use plastic is bad for the environment. It's extremely energy intensive to produce, and on the back end, single-use plastics are not recyclable, and they don't biodegrade. We need policy on this issue, but not this one. Please vote down SB 493. Thank you.