

January 31, 2023

Chairwoman Erickson and Honorable Members of the Kansas Senate Commerce Committee,

As a Kansan concerned about the effects of plastic pollution on our current and future environment and community well-being, I am opposed to SB 47. I hope the Kansas Legislature will continue to allow local communities to chart their own ways forward, in the effort to reduce plastic waste and respond to citizens' environmental priorities. These citizen-led efforts reflect the best of our state—engaging neighbors, putting our children's needs first, listening to the evidence. I volunteer with a group of elementary students whose worries about the climate have led them to convince their school to find alternatives to plastic water bottles and reduce plastic waste in the school cafeteria. They even asked the PTA to reduce single-use plastic in their school holiday parties. As adults, we should be inspired by kids' willingness to make changes today, in pursuit of a healthier tomorrow.

I oppose SB 47 as an overreach of state authority that would undermine local government. Kansas' Constitution gives cities power to determine their local affairs and grants "the largest measure of self-government". These provisions require that cities be allowed to decide our own futures.

I specifically oppose SB 47 because it would block communities' exploration of local efforts to address the pollution of single-use plastic products. While my city does not have an ordinance that would be overturned by SB 47, we do have many citizens involved in discussions about the environmental policies we want—including conversations about ways to reduce single-use plastic. These efforts should be allowed to continue, especially as we learn more about the costs of plastic waste to our city's waste management today and to our community's future environmental sustainability.

If you spend time with many 10-14 year olds, you'll likely hear alarming statistics about the harmful effects of plastic bags, which last for centuries in landfills, add to greenhouse gases warming the planet, and—especially devastating for many kids—end up in sea turtles' stomachs. As we grapple with these consequences—and the urgent costs of clean-up and landfill storage—communities should retain our powers to decide how to allocate our own resources and protect our future.

I urge you to reject SB 47, to continue to allow local communities to determine our own policies about the products we will allow. Thank you for your consideration and your service.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Melinda K. Lewis".

Melinda Lewis  
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