

To: The Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee

Date: January 25, 2024

Topic: Letter in Opposition to HB 2446

On nice days, I often take walks around my neighborhood, and, as I walk, I pick up trash and recyclables from along the streets. Most days, I fill a bag with discarded aluminum cans and single use plastic items such as straws, plastic knives and forks, food containers, and plastic bottles of all types. Some of it can be recycled, but most of it just has to go in the trash. Most of the single use plastic items are not picked up by anyone, so they are just unsightly litter.

Strangely, I very seldom find plastic bags along the streets. When it is windy, as it usually is, I have seen them float high in the air. This morning, I found a plastic bag hanging in a tree in my yard. They also end up on fences, in the tops of trees, in storm drains, in fields, or in any body of water nearby. Upon one occasion, I caught a plastic bag while fishing. Plastic bags are a very special kind of problem as they cannot be put in with the normal curbside recycling. If they are put there, they often jam the recycling equipment, causing a shutdown while they are removed. A few stores take them back, but only about 12% are actually recycled. There are many alternatives to using plastic grocery bags. Braums uses entirely paper bags and Aldis does not provide bags at all, so people use boxes or bring their own bags.

Though each plastic bag does not weigh much, it is estimated that 92 billion plastic bags are used in the United States each year. That is about 1.1 billion pounds of plastic bags. Not only do they add about \$800 million to retail grocery prices - most of them end up in landfills, being incinerated, or scattered across the landscape.

Animals often ingest plastic when they eat food thrown away in plastic bags. Plastic bags also end up in places they shouldn't be, such storm drains, sewage treatment plants, or even in a cow's stomachs. It has been reported that, at slaughter, it is not uncommon to find plastic materials inside cattle's stomachs. Plasticizers and micro plastic particles have been found to be in meat and milk, and in us. Of a representative sample of people in the US, 80% tested positive for microplastics in their bodies. A Washington Post story reports that microplastics and associated plasticizers have the potential to disrupt immune and endocrine systems, damage organs, cause inflammation, and increase cancer risk.

Plastic bags make up much of the single use plastic litter that cities must deal with. Each city or municipality has different ways of treating sewage, disposing of trash, recycling, and cleaning up litter. It would be best if each city could develop its own unique regulations for using and disposing of plastic waste. SB 2446 would not let that happen. The Kansas Constitution provides for Home Rule for cities, and it does not make sense to violate that principle just to keep cities from banning single use plastics.

Respectfully submitted,

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