

HB 2446 - Written-only Opponent - 1/30/24

By Rev. Thad Holcombe, On behalf of Lawrence Ecology Teams United In Sustainability (LETUS)

Chairman Thompson and Members of the Committee,

I am presenting written testimony on behalf of LETUS (Lawrence Ecology Teams United in Sustainability). We are an interfaith network of faith communities educating and advocating for earth care. Representatives from the following faith communities comprise the network: First Presbyterian Church, Lawrence Jewish Community Congregation, Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Plymouth Congregational, Oread Friends Meeting, St. John the Evangelist Catholic, Trinity Episcopal, Islamic Center of Lawrence, Kansas Zen Center. These communities represent approximately 3,000 voters in Lawrence.

We are in opposition to HB2446. We submitted, along with other interested groups and individuals, a request to the City of Lawrence Commissioners to create an ordinance prohibiting the use of single bag plastic. Our request was advocated by the faith communities of LETUS as an earth care concern. We were not the only network of citizens to do so. This included the Lawrence Sustainability Advisory Board, a fourth grade class in Lawrence, and other concerned citizens of Lawrence. The elementary school class received permission to show a five minute documentary depicting how plastic from Lawrence and Kansas ends up in the creeks, rivers and ocean increasing the level of poisons imbibed by you and me and all forms of life.

The continuous use of the earth as a trash receptacle for plastic needs to be curtailed. At the trash dump which receives plastic bags that are not recycled, plastic bags on a windy day are blown into the air and become balloons that travel to nearby pastures, fields and homes. There have been reports of cattle and horses being suffocated by plastic bags. They also get into recycling machines, causing damage.

Since the invention of plastic in the 1940's our society has increasingly used plastic bags for the carrying of groceries and other items. Using alternatives that are not plastic are feasible. This continued use of plastic as tote bags is symptomatic of a "convenience addiction".

The citizens of Lawrence have spoken through their representatives on the City Commission to limit the use of plastic bags. It is an overreach of the state to then decide that these citizens have been mistaken. In addition, using the landscape as a garbage receptacle violates our understanding that the earth is worthy of respect. It is an ethical concern as is the infringement on the process of democracy to have votes by fellow citizens dismissed as irrelevant.

We are stating our opposition based on our attempting to be faithful to the earth, our home, a place where all Creation may flourish. This is in keeping with our religious traditions and not as either a "liberal" or "conservative" position.

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