



June 3, 2024

The Honorable Malia Cohen, Chair
The Honorable Eleni Kounalakis, Member
Joe Stephenshaw, Member
California State Lands Commission
100 Howe Avenue, Suite 100 South
Sacramento CA 95825

Submitted via email: cslc.commissionmeetings@slc.ca.gov

SUBJECT: June 7, 2024 Meeting - Item 76 - SUPPORT

Dear Chair Cohen and Commissioners Kounalakis and Stephenshaw,

Oceana and the Ocean Conservancy support the California State Lands Commission approving Agenda Item 76 to support SB 1053 (Blakespear) and AB 2236 (Bauer-Kahan). This legislation would end the distribution and sale of thicker plastic film bags in grocery and convenience stores across the state. The current bag ban language has resulted in the use of thicker film plastic bags, which are not recyclable and rarely reused for shopping. Additionally, SB 1053 and AB 2236 would increase the recyclability standard of paper bags to be made from 50% postconsumer recycled materials. Plastic film bags have no place in California, and the state is overdue in eliminating them from grocery stores and convenience stores.

Plastic pollution threatens California's lands, waterways, coastline, climate, and communities. The Commission has a critical role in managing the 4 million acres of tide and submerged lands and beds of natural waterways it oversees, including preserving the "irreplaceable natural habitats for wildlife, vegetation, and biological communities,"¹ and these lands are at risk from plastic pollution. Plastic does not biodegrade but instead breaks up into smaller and smaller pieces. The toxic chemicals released from plastic can damage soil quality and leach into groundwater.^{2,3} Plastic bags are one of

¹ ["About the California State Lands Commission."](#)

² Sajjad, M., et. al, (2022) Microplastics in the soil environment: A critical review, *Environmental Technology & Innovation*.

³ Zimmermann, L., et al. (2021). Plastic Products Leach Chemicals That Induce In Vitro Toxicity under Realistic Use Conditions. *Environmental Science & Technology*.

the most commonly found pollutants in our oceans,⁴ and freshwater and marine life ingest microplastics that are detrimental to their health.^{5,6}

The Commission is a leader in the fight against climate change. Almost all plastic is made from fossil fuels, and plastic emits greenhouse gasses at all stages from extraction and production to use and disposal.⁷ In fact, if plastic was a country, it would be the fifth largest emitter of greenhouse gasses in the world.⁸ Climate goals cannot be met without addressing the plastic pollution crisis, including reducing the production and use of single-use plastics.

We have attached two letters signed by 75 organizations in support of SB 1053 and AB 2236 that provide more details on the background of the problems of the thicker plastic film bags and substance of the legislation.

We thank the Commission for your leadership and ask you to vote to support SB 1053 and AB 2236 to better protect California's lands, waters, and coasts from plastic bag pollution,

Sincerely,



Anja Brandon, Ph.D.
Associate Director, US Plastics Policy
Ocean Conservancy



Ashley Draeger
Pacific Policy and Communications
Manager
Oceana

⁴ Ocean Conservancy. "[Building A Clean Swell: 2018 Report](#)." (2018)

⁵ Khan M.L., et al. Effects of microplastics in freshwater fishes health and the implications for human health. (2023) *Brazilian Journal of Biology*.

⁶ United Nations. "[Understanding plastic pollution and its impact on lives](#)". (2023).

⁷ CIEL. "[Plastic & Climate: The Hidden Costs of a Plastic Planet](#)." (2019)

⁸ Zheng, J. and Suh, S. (2019) Strategies to reduce the global carbon footprint of plastics. *Nature Climate Change*.



April 10, 2024

The Honorable Chair Anna Caballero
Senate Appropriations Committee

1021 O Street, Suite 3230
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: SB 1053 (Blakespear) Solid waste: reusable grocery bags: standards: plastic film prohibition – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Caballero,

On behalf of the above organizations, we write in strong support SB 1053 (Blakespear), which ends the use of thicker plastic bags in grocery stores and convenience stores and reduces California’s dependency on plastic. In 2014, California passed the nation’s first ban on plastic bags. SB 270 (Padilla) required all plastic bags used in grocery, convenience, and retail stores that include grocery, to be reusable. After a decade under SB 270, it has become clear that California has not eliminated plastic grocery bags. The standards for reusable bags have resulted in exempt bags that are still made of thicker plastic, high-density polyethylene, or HDPE.

However, relatively few consumers re-use these exempt plastic bags for shopping. Investigative reports found that even when the bags were returned to the store for recycling, many still found their way to landfills.ⁱ CalRecycle’s statewide residential disposal reports suggest that over 5 billion bags in this category may have been landfilled in 2021, marking a significant reversal from several years of declining disposal. CalRecycle’s 2018ⁱⁱ and 2021ⁱⁱⁱ Waste Characterization studies correlate with Alameda County’s findings; the agency reported a 50-65% growth in the volume of “Plastic Grocery and Other Merchandise Bags” since 2018, exceeding 140,000 tons annually—a level not seen since 2003. According to Alameda County data sampled from a subset of stores, there was about an 800% increase in stores’ compliant thick plastic bag purchases from 2015 to 2023.

SB 1053 would eliminate the existing exemption of plastic film bags and require grocery and certain retail stores to no longer provide these bags to their customers. Further, SB 1053 increases standards for reusable bags to ensure they are not replaced by a new version of an HDPE bag with plastic film material, or a non-plastic bag that can be easily damaged and is not durable. Lastly, SB 1053 increases the recyclability standard of paper bags to be made from 100% postconsumer recycled materials.

From production to disposal, plastic waste is detrimental to the environment and human health. Plastics are primarily made from fossil fuels, and the extraction and refinement of fossil feedstocks for plastics release an array of toxic substances into the air and water, including known carcinogens and neurotoxins.^{iv} Upon disposal, plastic does not biodegrade, and toxic chemicals released from plastics damage soil quality and leeches into groundwater. Plastic bags are one of the most found pollutants in our seas^v, and marine life ingests microplastics that are detrimental to their health.^{vi} Therefore it is necessary to curb California’s plastic production as much as possible to preserve our environment and health.

For these reasons, we support SB 1053 to reduce plastic waste in California by closing the exempt bag loophole at grocery stores and retail grocers to further a sustainable future.

Sincerely,



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Executive Director
Wholly H2O



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Program Director
350 Sacramento



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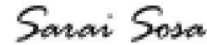
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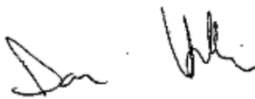
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Organizer
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David Levine
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American Sustainable Business
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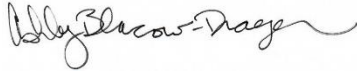
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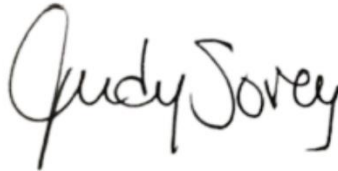
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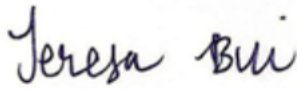
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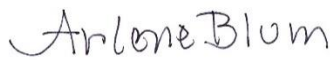
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ⁱ Gutman, M., Simon, E., Park, C., Simpson, T., Kofsky, J., Schlosberg, J., Brooksbank, T., Yamashita, S., & Kim, S. R. (2023, May 23). *We put dozens of trackers in plastic bags for recycling. Many were trashed.* ABC News. <https://abcnews.go.com/US/put-dozens-trackers-plastic-bags-recycling-trashed/story?id=99509422>

ⁱⁱ California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery, 2018 Facility-Based Characterization of Solid Waste in California (2020). Sacramento, California.

ⁱⁱⁱ California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery, 2021 Facility-Based Characterization of Solid Waste in California (2022). Sacramento, California.

^{iv} The Plastics Production Problem. Center for Biological Diversity. (n.d.). <https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/campaigns/plastic-production/index.html>

^v Merran, J. (Ed.). (2018, June). Building A Clean Swell: 2018 Report. Ocean Conservancy. <https://oceanconservancy.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/FINAL-2018-ICC-REPORT.pdf>

^{vi} Understanding plastic pollution and its impact on lives. United Nations. (2023, June 5). <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/may-2023/understanding-plastic-pollution-and-its-impact-lives#:~:text=Unlike%20other%20materials%2C%20plastic%20does,can%20cause%20serious%20health%20impacts> .



April 10, 2024

The Honorable Chair Buffy Wicks
 Assembly Appropriations Committee

1021 O Street, Suite 8220
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: AB 2236 (Bauer-Kahan) Solid waste: reusable grocery bags: standards: plastic film prohibition
– SUPPORT**

Dear Assemblymember Wicks,

On behalf of the above **75** organizations, we write in strong support of AB 2236 (Bauer-Kahan) which ends the use of thicker plastic bags in grocery stores and convenience stores and reduces California's dependency on plastic. In 2014, California passed the nation's first ban on plastic bags. SB 270 (Padilla) required all plastic bags used in grocery, convenience, and retail stores that include grocery, to be reusable. After a decade under SB 270, it has become clear that California has not eliminated plastic grocery bags. The standards for reusable bags have resulted in exempt bags that are still made of thicker plastic, high-density polyethylene, or HDPE.

However, relatively few consumers re-use these exempt plastic bags for shopping. Investigative reports found that even when the bags were returned to the store for recycling, many still found their way to landfills.ⁱ CalRecycle's statewide residential disposal reports suggest that over 5 billion bags in this category may have been landfilled in 2021, marking a significant reversal from several years of declining disposal. CalRecycle's 2018ⁱⁱ and 2021ⁱⁱⁱ Waste Characterization studies correlate with Alameda County's findings; the agency reported a 50-65% growth in the volume of "Plastic Grocery and Other Merchandise Bags" since 2018, exceeding 140,000 tons annually—a level not seen since 2003. According to Alameda County data sampled from a subset of stores, there was about an 800% increase in stores' compliant thick plastic bag purchases from 2015 to 2023.

SB 1053 would eliminate the existing exemption of plastic film bags and require grocery and certain retail stores to no longer provide these bags to their customers. Further, SB 1053 increases standards for reusable bags to ensure they are not replaced by a new version of an HDPE bag with plastic film material, or a non-plastic bag that can be easily damaged and is not durable. Lastly, SB 1053 increases the recyclability standard of paper bags to be made from 100% postconsumer recycled materials.

From production to disposal, plastic waste is detrimental to the environment and human health. Plastics are primarily made from fossil fuels, and the extraction and refinement of fossil feedstocks for plastics release an array of toxic substances into the air and water, including known carcinogens and neurotoxins.^{iv} Upon disposal, plastic does not biodegrade, and toxic chemicals released from plastics damage soil quality and leeches into groundwater. Plastic bags are one of the most found pollutants in our seas^v, and marine life ingests microplastics that are detrimental to their health.^{vi} Therefore it is necessary to curb California's plastic production as much as possible to preserve our environment and health.

For these reasons, we support SB 1053 to reduce plastic waste in California by closing the exempt bag loophole at grocery stores and retail grocers to further a sustainable future.

Sincerely,



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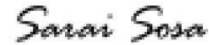
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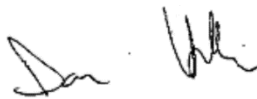
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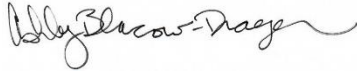
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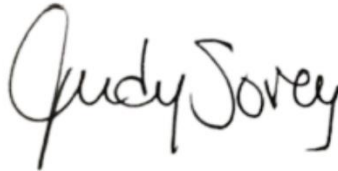
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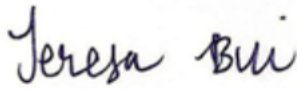
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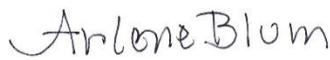
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