



February 19, 2019

RE: Letter to Oppose House Bill 2509 – Prohibits use of single-use checkout bags except in certain cases

Dear House Energy and Environment Committee:

On behalf of the American Forest & Paper Associationⁱ (AF&PA) and the Renewable Bag Councilⁱⁱ (RBC), we appreciate the opportunity to share our perspective on legislation under consideration by the Committee on Environment and Energy: House Bill 2509 (HB 2509), which would impose a tax of no less than 10 cents per bag on all “disposable” shopping bags.

We believe that paper bags should be excluded from measures to tax retail bags. The bag tax unfairly targets paper products, implying they are part of the environmental problem rather than the solution, and discouraging consumers from choosing paper bags that are recyclable, compostable, made of recycled material, and reusable. In fact, paper bags are the only shopping bags that are commonly accepted for recycling at curbside in Oregon. Responding to consumer demands, many retailers have already voluntarily transitioned to paper.

Government imposed product taxes increase costs for consumers and can create distortions in the free flow of recoverable materials for reuse in new products. Taxes and fees burden hard working citizens, increasing the cost of basic necessities and disproportionately impact those who are low-income.

Paper recovery is an environmental success story, saving an average of 3.3 cubic yards of landfill space for each ton of paper recycled. Paper recovery has fostered a dynamic marketplace that allows recovered fiber to find its highest value end-use in manufacturing new products. That, in turn, helps to encourage more recycling.

Our industry achieves a consistently high recovery rate. In 2017, 65.8 percent of all paper consumed in the U.S. was recovered for recycling, and the recovery rate has met or exceeded 63 percent for the past nine years. Paper is the most-recycled material in the U.S. today. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, more paper (by weight) is recovered for recycling from municipal solid waste streams than glass, plastic and aluminum combined. In 2014, 96 percent of the U.S. population had access to community curbside and/or drop-off paper recycling services.

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We look forward to continuing our work with the state of Oregon. Please feel free to contact Terry Webber, Executive Director, Packaging, AF&PA at (202) 463-2732 or terry_webber@afandpa.org for further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Terry J. Webber", enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Terry Webber
Executive Director, Packaging

ⁱ The American Forest & Paper Association (AF&PA) serves to advance a sustainable U.S. pulp, paper, packaging, tissue and wood products manufacturing industry through fact-based public policy and marketplace advocacy. AF&PA member companies make products essential for everyday life from renewable and recyclable resources and are committed to continuous improvement through the industry's sustainability initiative — Better Practices, Better Planet 2020. *The forest products industry accounts for approximately four percent of the total U.S. manufacturing GDP, manufactures nearly \$300 billion in products annually and employs approximately 950,000 men and women. The industry meets a payroll of approximately \$55 billion annually and is among the top 10 manufacturing sector employers in 45 states.* In Oregon, the forest products industry employs over 38,000 individuals, with an annual payroll of more than \$2.1 billion.

ⁱⁱ The Renewable Bag Council (RBC) is comprised of manufacturers and converters of renewable, recycled, recyclable and compostable Kraft paper used for checkout bags at grocery and retail outlets throughout Oregon and across the United States. The RBC is affiliated with the American Forest & Paper Association (AF&PA). Visit the RBC online at www.renewablebag.org or follow us on Twitter @renewablebag.