



April 19, 2019

House Committee on Rules
Oregon State Legislature

RE: House Bill 2509 single-use plastic carryout bag prohibition

Dear Committee Members:

Washington County supports House Bill 2509 that prohibits the use of certain single-use checkout bags. This bill, referred to your committee from the Energy and Environment Committee, aligns with the county's plastic bag prohibition policy goals, including the promotion of durable bags. It will help reduce the negative impacts that plastic bags create for recycling facilities, help reduce litter, and create a consistent statewide approach to single-use plastic carryout bag prohibitions.

HB 2509 includes a fee if paper bags are used to replace plastic bags. We also support this element of the legislation. Small fees remind consumers to bring reusable bags and not just replace plastic bags with paper bags. Without a fee on paper bags, many consumers will switch to the remaining "free" paper option. For example, after the City of Portland adopted its ordinance in 2012 without a fee on paper bags, there was an approximate 500 percent increase in paper bag usage.¹ The goal of the policy is not to replace plastic bags with paper bags, it's to encourage reusing bags, including durable bags.

A fee (if equal to the cost of a bag) is fair to consumers. Only those consumers who choose to buy paper bags pay for them. The fee included in HB 2509 is avoidable for customers that bring their own reusable bags. And there is no fee charged to customers that use vouchers issued under the Women, Infants and Children program or electronic benefits transfer cards issued by the Department of Human Services.

The fee proposed in HB 2509 helps offset the higher costs incurred by businesses that provide paper bags to consumers. Single-use paper bags are more expensive than their plastic counterparts. The Northwest Grocery Association estimates that for large grocery stores costs would increase \$35,000 to \$60,000 per store without a fee.

In summary, Washington County supports HB 2509, as amended and voted out of committee on April 4, 2019. Its inclusion of a five-cent fee is designed to produce positive environmental benefits and is an avoidable cost by consumers that use durable bags; it appears to be fair to customers, and it helps offset increased costs incurred by affected businesses.

Sincerely,

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¹ City of Portland, Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, Promoting Reusable Checkout Bags in Portland One-Year Report, October 2012