

Governor Jerry Brown  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Brown:

Banning single-use plastic bags is an easy step to clean up our parks, streets, rivers, and the Pacific Ocean. We know this because, as elected officials, we serve many of the 120 California communities that have already banned single-use plastic bags. Together, these local governments represent more than one in three Californians. Our experience shows that this policy works. We encourage you to sign SB 270 and take this successful program statewide.

Studies of local plastic bag bans consistently show success. Post-ban, over 75 percent of shoppers in San Jose and Santa Monica brought their own bag or carried goods home by hand.<sup>1</sup> This cut San Jose's plastic bag storm drain litter by 89 percent, by 60 percent in the creeks and rivers, and by 59 percent on San Jose's streets.<sup>2</sup> Unincorporated Los Angeles County's ordinance cut single-use bag use by 94 percent, including a drop in paper bag use.<sup>3</sup>

Eliminating single-use plastic will protect our environment. A 2012 study by the Bay Area Stormwater Management Agencies Association observed that plastic bags were between 7 and 8 percent of the garbage washing into Bay Area storm drains.<sup>4</sup> Plastic bags are also one of the most common items littered on California's beaches according to Ocean Conservancy's annual beach cleanup data.<sup>5</sup> Other bags pollute parks, rivers, and streets throughout California.

Finally, we see SB 270 as being good policy for California's economy. California communities annually spend more than \$428 million to combat litter, including single-use plastic bags, and prevent it from entering the state's waterways.<sup>6</sup> A recent National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration study found that reducing marine debris by 50 percent on Orange County beaches could generate \$67 million in benefits to county residents over a three month period;<sup>7</sup> one more reason to keep litter-prone plastic bags out of the environment. Single-use plastic bags are a nightmare for local recycling programs. Sacramento's recycling facility must shut down its sorting equipment an average of six times per day to remove single-use plastic bags from the machinery.<sup>8</sup>

Even the private sector benefits from this policy. Transitioning to reusable bags is reducing overhead for thousands of stores, from chain supermarkets to mom and pop shops. We have even seen job growth

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<sup>1</sup> Kerrie Romanow, City of San Jose, Bring Your Own Bag Ordinance Implementation Results and Actions to Reduce EPS Foam Food Ware 6 (2012); Team Marine, Santa Monica High School, The Effects of the Plastic Bag Ban on Consumer Bag Choice at Santa Monica Grocery Stores 4 (2013).

<sup>2</sup> Romanow, *supra* at 5.

<sup>3</sup> Los Angeles County, Implementation of the County of Los Angeles Plastic and Paper Carryout Bag Ordinance 1 (2012).

<sup>4</sup> Bay Area Stormwater Management Agencies Association, Preliminary Baseline Trash Generation Rates for San Francisco Bay Area MS4s 10 (2012).

<sup>5</sup> *E.g.* Ocean Conservancy, Turning the Tide on Trash 20–21 (2014).

<sup>6</sup> Natural Resources Defense Council, Waste in Our Water 2 (2013).

<sup>7</sup> National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration, Assessing the Economic Benefits of Reductions in Marine Debris, Executive Summary (2014).

<sup>8</sup> Steve Harriman, Staff Report: Single-Use Plastic bag ordinance in the City of Sacramento 4 (2013).

for reusable bag makers and in paper manufacturing.<sup>9</sup>

Banning single-use plastic bags has already succeeded for one in three Californians. We have made this policy work in our communities. We look forward to working with you to eliminate single-use plastic bags and achieve a healthier environment statewide. Please sign SB 270.

Sincerely,

[local elected officials]

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<sup>9</sup> Mark Murray, New Report: Local Plastic Bag Bans Deliver More Than Reduced Plastic Pollution and Waste, Californians Against Waste (Aug. 19, 2014), <http://www.cawrecycles.org/node/6413>.