



June 26, 2024

The Honorable Chair Ben Allen
Senate Environmental Quality Committee
1021 O Street, Room 3230
Sacramento, CA 95814

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

Dear Senator Allen,

On behalf of the above **76** 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.¹ 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 2018² and 2021³ 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.

AB 2236 (Bauer-Kahan) would only allow paper at check out and eliminate the existing exemption of plastic film. The bill now clearly defines point of sale to cover all transactions where purchased goods may be transferred to a customer. Further, AB 2236 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, AB 2236 increases the recyclability standard of paper bags to be made from 50% 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.⁴ Upon disposal, plastic does not biodegrade, and toxic chemicals released from plastics damage soil

¹ 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>

² California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery, 2018 Facility-Based Characterization of Solid Waste in California (2020). Sacramento, California.

³ California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery, 2021 Facility-Based Characterization of Solid Waste in California (2022). Sacramento, California.

⁴ The Plastics Production Problem. Center for Biological Diversity. (n.d.). <https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/campaigns/plastic-production/index.html>

quality and leeches into groundwater. Plastic bags are one of the most found pollutants in our seas⁵, and marine life ingests microplastics that are detrimental to their health.⁶ 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 AB 2236 (Bauer-Kahan) 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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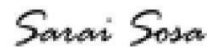
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⁵ Merran, J. (Ed.). (2018, June). Building A Clean Swell: 2018 Report. Ocean Conservancy.
<https://oceanconservancy.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/FINAL-2018-ICC-REPORT.pdf>

⁶ 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> .

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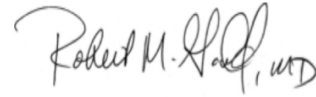
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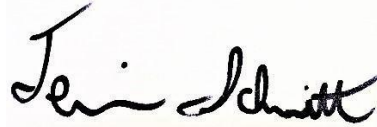
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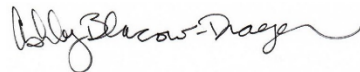
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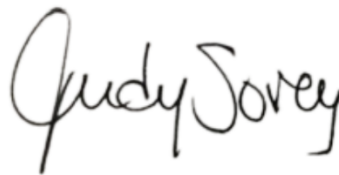
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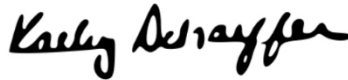
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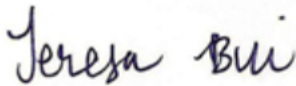
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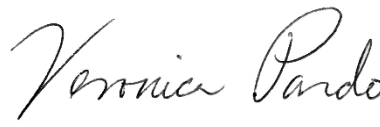
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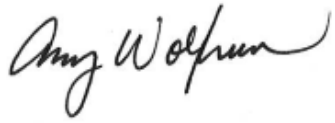
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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy Wolfrum". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Amy Wolfrum
Director, California Policy and
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