

March 26, 2024

Dear Chair Klevorn and State and Local Government Finance and Policy Committee Members:

I am writing on behalf of Northeast Metro Climate Action in support of the following bill:
HF3345 Prohibition on banning merchant bags removed.

Plastic is flying under the radar as a climate change contributor. If it were a country, it would be the fifth-highest emitter in the world. The majority of greenhouse gas emissions occur during refinement and production. Recycling plastic does not erase the impact of plastic production. Also, single-use plastic accounts for 15% of methane emissions from landfills. This is a growing problem as petrochemical companies have invested more than \$200 billion in the last 10 years and now have excess capacity. Half of the plastic ever produced was made in the last 20 years and it is set to double again in the next 20 years, as fossil fuel companies see plastic production as a growth opportunity that could help offset any decrease from electricity or transportation sectors.

We work with local governments in the northeast metro area and many of them have signed up with the GreenStep Cities program or are working on other local sustainability efforts. Some have asked about options to reduce plastic, including plastic bags. Removing this prohibition would restore control to local governments and provide them with an additional tool to deal with climate change and plastic pollution.

Litter is also a problem for our communities. We have participated in litter clean-ups and the bulk of the litter collected has been plastic, especially bags and bottles. Prevention of litter is much more effective than clean-up efforts and saves taxpayers money.

Thank you for considering our testimony. We urge you pass this important bill that will return local control to communities interested in tackling the plastic waste problem.

Sincerely,
Joe Crowe
Northeast Metro Climate Action (NEMCA)

