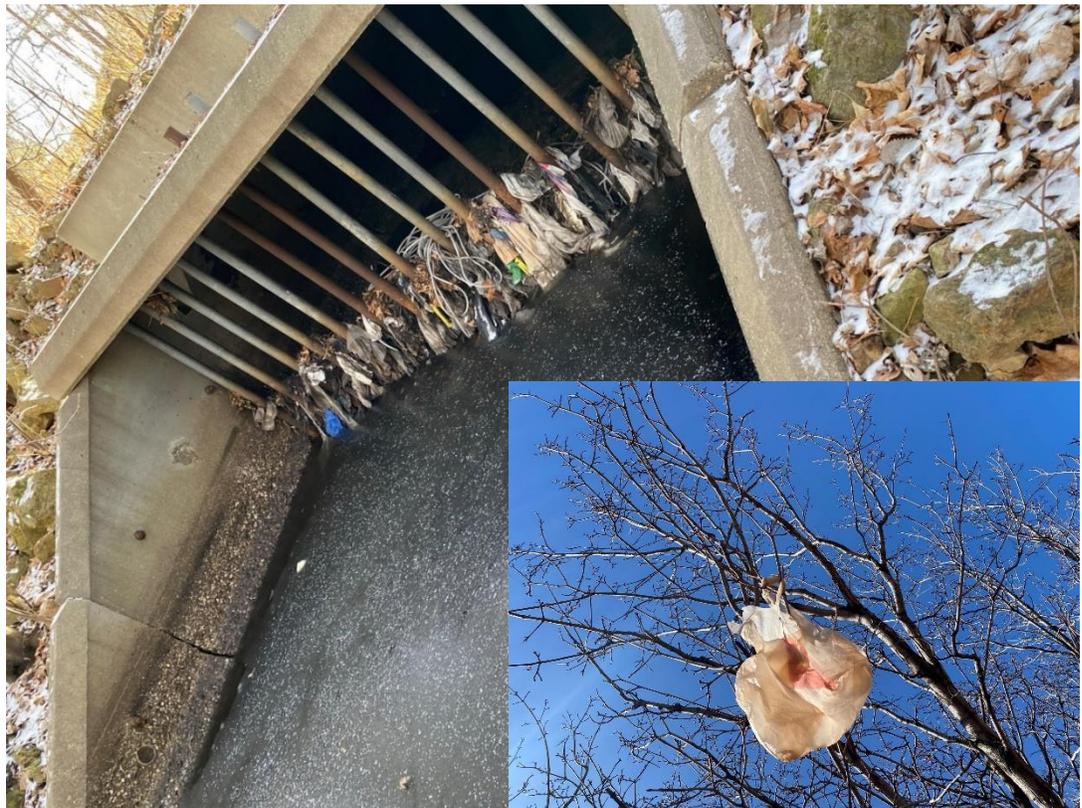


March 22, 2024

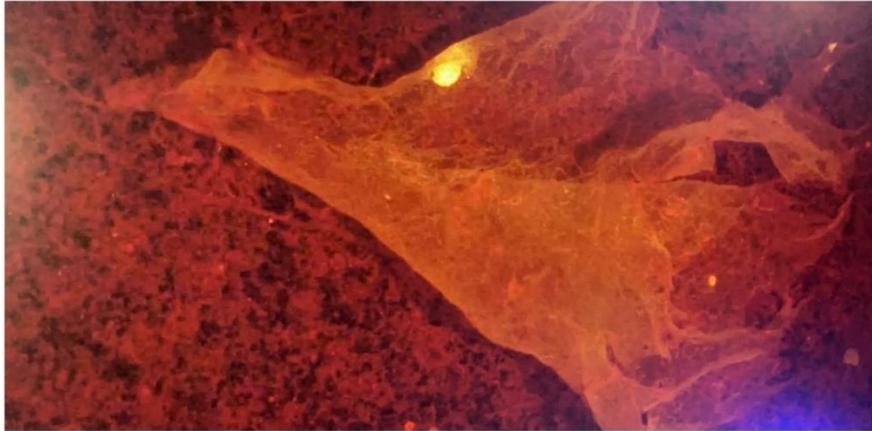
Dear Chair Klevorn and State and Local Government Finance and Policy Committee Members,

I am writing this letter in support of HF 3345, a call to remove the prohibition on banning merchant bags. The plastic grocery bag was first introduced to U.S. grocery stores in 1976. That means two years before I was born, there were no single-use plastic grocery bags. Today I am 46 years old, and more than 100 billion plastic bags are used in America *every year*. My children, ages 10 and 14, see plastic grocery bags each day as trash tangled in the branches of trees, drifting through parking lots, and clogging storm drains. The images below were taken from a family hike through Woodlake Nature Center in Richfield Minnesota. This is the price we all pay for a perception of convenience.



Plastic bags are made of low-density polyethylene or linear low-density polyethylene, both derived from fossil fuels. Raw materials like natural gas and crude oil are pulled from the ground, refined, transported, and then shaped into a bag. All of this is done only for the product to be used for an average of 12 minutes before it becomes trash. Once discarded, it may be buried or because of its high surface area and low density, it may be taken by the wind and carried far away. No one knows where it will go, but what is certain is that it will remain in the environment because conventional *plastics do not fully mineralize*. That means nature is unable to pick the lock and turn polymers into something useful. Instead, these particles crumble into finer bits and accumulate in the soil, the air, the water, and in living things.

I study microplastic pollution, and I have found shredded, weathered bits of plastic film in samples of wastewater and even in urban air samples. In the image below, you see a shred of plastic film that was recovered from a wastewater sample I processed in 2020. This tiny plastic film is about 200 μm . Below this picture, there is a plastic bag that I found in the alleyway behind my house. It was probably half a meter long. The larger plastic film gets weathered and breaks down into the smaller plastic. Do we really want this trash inside us and inside the people we most cherish?



Last night I read four papers about plastic pollution inside human bodies. One found plastic in cirrhotic liver tissue, one found plastic in human urine, a third found plastic in tumoral colon tissue samples, and a fourth found it in carotid artery plaque. Plastic pollution has already been found in human blood, breastmilk, lungs, and placenta. Our bodies are filling up like our landfills are filling up. This is all now known. That means if HF3345 isn't supported today, Minnesotans will look back on this moment and wonder why our leaders didn't take the necessary steps to allow communities in our state to protect themselves. I'm involved in this advocacy work because I don't want to carry the burden of feeling like I did nothing, when the scientific evidence is very clearly telling me that *something needs to be done*. Please, help us return control to local municipalities.

Thank you for your time.


Mary Kosuth