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The Pittsburgh Region has beautiful neighborhoods and natural places-- but plastic pollution is threatening our environment and our health

On behalf of the organizations and businesses signed below, I am writing to support a ban on single-use plastic bags.

Americans generate over 35 million tons of plastic waste each year and less than 10% gets recycled.¹ Our communities are overrun with litter, trash is piling up in our environment, and single-use plastics are polluting our waterways and oceans. Once there, plastic will remain for hundreds of years, if not longer.

Single-use plastics, like bags, are a profound threat to global environmental and public health.

- **Single-use plastic bags endanger wildlife around the world.** Plastic bags kill an estimated 100,000 marine animals annually, according to the Center for Biological Diversity. Bags can be mistaken for food by animals like sea turtles and whales, blocking their digestive tracts and causing them to starve. Bags also entangle animals, leading to drowning or suffocation.²
- **Plastic waste is a threat to human health.** Over time, plastic bags break down into microplastics, which can contain chemicals linked to cancer and hormone disruption. More and more, these microplastics are being found in our drinking water, in the fish we eat, and even the air we breathe.³ Recently, microplastics were found in each of the Three Rivers, 9 Mile Run, Sewickley Creek, Chartiers Creek, and the Youghiogheny River.⁴ There is no effective way to get microplastics out of our environment once there, so the best way to stop this form of pollution is to cut it off at the source.
- **Plastics are made of fossil fuels and contribute to climate change.** Single-use plastic bags increase the demand for fuels like fracked gas and increase the risks to our air and water that accompany its extraction. Creating new plastic is also emissions-intense, and

¹ US EPA Office of Land and emergency Management, "[Advancing Sustainable Materials Management: 2017 Fact Sheet](#)" United States Environmental Protection Agency, November 2019.

² Center for Biological Diversity, "[10 Facts About Single-Use Plastic Bags](#)".

³ United States Geological Survey, "[Microplastics in our Nation's waterways](#)".

⁴ Faran Savitz, "[Microplastics in Pennsylvania: A survey of waterways](#)" *PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center*, March 03, 2021.

without changing course, emissions from plastics production and incineration could amount to 56 gigatons of carbon between now and 2050 - or almost 50 times the annual emissions of all of the coal fired power plants in the U.S.⁵ For the Pittsburgh region to be a leader in addressing climate change, we need to move beyond single-use bags.

Besides the environmental harm caused by single-use plastic bags, they also hurt our pocket books with millions of dollars in hidden, externalized costs born by communities and their residents.

- PennDOT spends \$13 million on average every year cleaning up litter just from the sides of highways, a cost that gets passed on to taxpayers.⁶
- The City of Pittsburgh spends \$6.3 million a year to clean up litter and illegal dumping.⁷
- Plastic bags specifically clog storm drains. While there aren't public estimates for Pittsburgh, the Philadelphia Water Department estimates that street litter, often plastic, is doubling the maintenance costs of their stormwater infrastructure. Cleanup costs for water authorities end up as costs for ratepayers.
- Plastic bags cause problems for recycling machinery which can't process them. Plastic film, like bags, are the most common and costliest forms of contamination that recyclers deal with.⁸

Nothing we use for a few minutes should litter our streets, pollute our waterways and threaten our environment for hundreds of years. If we truly want to protect our health and planet from the scourge of single use plastic bags, the simplest, most straight-forward solution is to not have them in circulation in the first place. **Leaders in the Pittsburgh region should join hundreds of cities and towns across the nation in banning single-use plastic shopping bags.**

Plastic bag bans passed elsewhere have been proven effective at curbing the plague of plastic pollution.⁹ That's why we, the undersigned organizations, businesses, and community leaders support policies that we know work to reduce single-use plastic waste in our communities. And we urge our municipal officials to do so as well.

⁵ ["Sweeping New Report on Global Environmental Impact of Plastics Reveals Severe Damage to Climate"](#) Center for International Environmental Law, May 15, 2019

⁶ PennDOT, ["Enforcing Litter Laws"](#) Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, 2020.

⁷ Burns & McDonnell, ["THE COST OF LITTER & ILLEGAL DUMPING IN PENNSYLVANIA: A STUDY OF NINE CITIES ACROSS THE COMMONWEALTH"](#) Submitted to Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful, January 2020.

⁸ Cody Marshall and Karen Bandhauer, ["The heavy toll of contamination"](#) *Recycling Today*, April 19, 2017.

⁹ Scientist Action and Advocacy Network, ["Measuring the Effectiveness of Plastic Bag Laws"](#) for PlasticBagLaws.org, 2020

Sincerely,

1. PennEnvironment
2. 61B Cafe
3. 61C Cafe
4. Ace Paints and Unfinished Furniture
5. Adda Coffee & Tea
6. Allegheny Youth Development
7. Amanda Lee Glassware
8. Apricot Lane Boutique
9. Arts & Crafts: Botanica & Occult Shop
10. Atelier de Fer Coffee & Tea
11. Bantha Tea Bar
12. Bear Dog Bicycles
13. Beaver County Marcellus Awareness Community (BCMAC)
14. Bhutanese Community Association of Pittsburgh (BCAP)
15. Biddle's Escape
16. Black Cat Market
17. Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation
18. Botanical Vegan Cafe and Market
19. Box Heart Gallery
20. Breathe Project
21. Building Performance Association
22. Carnegie Mellon University Graduate Student Assembly
23. Chatham University Green Team
24. Chocolate Moose
25. City Books
26. Clean Water Action
27. Climate Reality Project Pittsburgh
28. CMU Sustainable Earth
29. Costa RicArt
30. Dancing Gnome Beer
31. Dianne's Dishware
32. Eons Fashion Antique
33. Fern Hollow Bicycles
34. FracTracker Alliance
35. Georgetown University
36. Glassworks
37. Greenfield Neighbors for Clean Air
38. Highway Robbery Vintage
39. Hollow Oaks Land Trust
40. Homegrown Yoga
41. Homewood Concerned Citizens Council
42. Humane Action Pittsburgh
43. Inhale Yoga
44. James Floral Shoppe
45. Jerry's Records
46. Kara Kakes Specialty Cakes
47. Kraynick's Bike Shop Inc
48. Love, Pittsburgh
49. McDonough's Antiques
50. Mello & Sons
51. Mix Candle Co
52. Moda Pittsburgh, Moda Lawrenceville
53. Mountain Watershed Association
54. Mr. Sign
55. Oryza Asian Grill
56. Our Children Our Earth
57. PASUP. Pittsburghers Against Single Use Plastics
58. Patrick's Pub and Grille
59. Penn Avenue Pottery
60. Penn Hills Community Development Corporation
61. Phoenix Boutique
62. Physicians for Social Responsibility Pennsylvania
63. Pittsburgh Center for Creative Reuse
64. Pittsburgh Furniture Company
65. Pittsburgh Gold & Diamond Buyers
66. Point Breeze Organization
67. Pressley Ridge
68. Prestogeorge Coffee & Tea
69. Pretty Up Beechview
70. Pure Screen Printing
71. Pursuits
72. Redstart Roasters
73. Rolling Pepperoni
74. Sewickley Yarns

75. Shadyside Nursery
76. Shadyside Variety Store
77. Shear Timing
78. Shepherd Contracting LLC
79. Songbird Artistry
80. Southside Jewelers & More!
81. Sparkledragon's Magical Emporium
82. Spoiled Chics
83. Spring Hill Civic League
84. Student Government Board -
University of Pittsburgh
85. Suburban Landscape & Floral
Shoppe
86. Sustainable Monroeville
87. Synthesis
88. The Big Idea Bookstore and Cafe
89. The Picket Fence
90. The Plant Lady
91. The Post-landfill Action Network
92. The Sōl Collective
93. The Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition
94. The Women's Adventure Club of
Western PA
95. Thomas Blvd Group
96. Ujamaa Collective
97. University of Pittsburgh, Office of
Sustainability
98. Vestis
99. White Rabbit Salon
100. Whitehall Green Thumbers
Garden Club
101. Wildcard
102. Workshop PGH
103. Yeahyelhsa Illustrated Goods