

# Potential arguments/concerns that councilors have used with Bag it Duluth

## Plastics bags are not the major source of plastics in the great lakes.

Ideas to include in public testimony to counter councilor concerns:

- This is something we can all do together
- The concern with bags is not **only** about plastics in the lake, there are multiple concerns.
- What we do know is that plastic particles contaminate the globe and are found across the globe in oceans and on the highest mountain tops. Plastic production is slated to increase by 40% by 2050. Airborne deposition may be the largest source of microplastics to the great lakes.
- Plastic bags are among the top ten beach debris.
- Plastic bags plug stormwater infrastructure costing city of Duluth taxpayers money for cleaning and maintenance.
- “Plastic is among the most significant and rapidly growing sources of industrial greenhouse gas emissions,” the report says. “Emissions from plastic emerge not only from the production and manufacture of plastic itself, but from every stage in the plastic lifecycle – from the extraction and transport of the fossil fuels that are the primary feedstocks for plastic, to refining and manufacturing, to waste management, to the plastic that enters the environment.”

## Retailers should not benefit from a bag charge

Ideas to include in public testimony to counter councilor concerns:

- Why would we not want to support Duluth business
- The purpose of the fee is to discourage single bag usage. Not generate revenue. Where bag fees have been introduced citizens shift away by to 90%, away from single use bags. Retailers will see a limited economic benefit.
- In New Jersey, Santori’s Produce & Deli is instead donating the proceeds to the Marine Mammal Stranding Center in Brigantine. In Connecticut, Stop & Shop is donating all of the money it takes in from the paper bag fee to the Emerald Necklace Conservancy. Duluth business will similarly rise to the occasion.

## We shouldn’t have a bag fee

Ideas to include in public testimony to counter councilor concerns:

- Research has shown they are the most effective at incentivizing reuse.
- In 2015, England introduced a nationwide 6 cents in fee on bags. Sales of said bags has gone down by a whopping 90 percent at the country's seven major supermarket chains. In fact, the average consumer at those chains is now only taking 10 plastic grocery bags per year. <https://www.greenmatters.com/p/grocery-bag-sales-down-uk>
- A survey of Suffolk grocery stores that are members of the Food Industry Alliance of New York State showed an 80 percent decline in the distribution of single-use bags in the first and second quarters of 2018, said Jay Peltz, general counsel and senior vice president of government relations for the alliance, a trade group. <https://www.newsday.com/business/suffolk-nickel-plastic-bag-fee-reusable-1.24755898>

- Plastic bag charge in Scotland sees usage cut by 80% <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-34575364>

### **The charge can't be enforced;**

Ideas to include in public testimony to counter councilor concerns:

- The enforcement mechanism is modeled after ordinances in hundreds of towns and cities across the country. What can't it work in Duluth.
- The enforcement mechanism of a warning then a fine is the same for Duluth's ban on mercury thermometers and experience from Duluth showed that no retailers violated the ordinance.
- Importantly, there is both an economic incentive and an environmental incentive for retailers to comply with the law rather than break it. All Duluth businesses want to be good environmental stewards and have a desire to reduce their cost of bag purchases. Why would they break the law?
- Having the amount of the bag fee on the receipt is the main way to verify enforcement of the law because it allows anyone to easily see that customers are being charged for bags.
- Many businesses have indicated their support for the law because it will allow them to do the right thing. The ordinance creates a level playing field that helps businesses and consumers to do the right thing by aligning economic and environmental interests.

### **The timeline for implementation is to fast**

Ideas to include in public testimony to counter councilor concerns:

- Most multistate retailers such as Walgreens, CVS, Target, Barnes and Noble etc. already charge for single use bags in other locations. Their cash registers and software systems are programmed and ready for when the next city of state adopts a bag fee. This is no surprise.
- Krogers, the largest grocery in the country has already committed to a single use bag phase-out and multiple grocer's across New England, Colorado, California and elsewhere charge a fee for bags. This information has been on the front page of trade magazines and trade conferences. The bag it fee proposal is not a surprise to any retailer. They are simply waiting for it to happen.
- Locally, Bag it Duluth has sent several letters to Super One and left numerous phone calls asking for a meeting and shared the model ordinance. This is not a surprise.
- In the last year, the Great Lakes Aquarium and Yarn Harbor switched to a process where the charge for single use bags. They did this pretty much over night.
- Bag it Duluth has available templates for signage and consumer education and multiple state governments also have similar templates designed to educate consumers on the new law. It is a simple matter of copying and printing the information. Nothing new needs to be created.

## This will negatively impact low income people

Ideas to include in public testimony to counter councilor concerns:

- As proposed, those on WIC or SNAP will be exempted from the bag fee.
- In addition Bag it Duluth has helped foster a network of reusable bag collections and free reusable bag donations to local social service organizations and congregations.
- Bag it Duluth help promote the citywide Bagathon where citizens sewed and distributed for free bags.
- Churches are creating and donating reusable bags such as St. Paul's and the Unitarian Church.
- It is well recognized that low income and people of color will be disproportionately impacted by the impacts of climate change linked to our current material economy which prioritizes disposal over reduction and reuse. This bag it effort helps to mitigate climate impacts.

## OTHER HELPFUL ARGUMENTS

- **The reputation** of Duluth as an environmental and outdoor city is at stake if this is not passed. In this room we have MPR and other media. Hundreds of cities states and countries have already done what we are asking Duluth to do.
- **Climate science climate emergency** tells us that we have about 10 years to completely redo our material economy and shift to a culture of reuse. According to a recent study plastic contributes to greenhouse gas emissions at every stage of its lifecycle, from its production to its refining and the way it is managed as a waste product. This plastic binge threatens attempts to meet the Paris climate agreement. It means that by 2050 plastic will be responsible for up to 13% of the total "carbon budget" – equivalent to 615 coal-fired power plants. "Plastic is among the most significant and rapidly growing sources of industrial greenhouse gas emissions," [https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/may/15/single-use-plastics-a-serious-climate-change-hazard-study-warns?fbclid=IwAR3FtgOI1Fkr4sJ3od2rYz4\\_NnSoHZEk9v2G\\_YL9XHE6JAJTCbBP6dzofc](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/may/15/single-use-plastics-a-serious-climate-change-hazard-study-warns?fbclid=IwAR3FtgOI1Fkr4sJ3od2rYz4_NnSoHZEk9v2G_YL9XHE6JAJTCbBP6dzofc)
- **This is about a rapid shift to a culture of reuse** We waste energy, resources and create litter. Single use products depend on disposable people and a disposable planet. The goal of this ordinance is promote reuse through a change in behavior. The MN Office of the Legislative Auditor Recycling and Waste Reduction Report (February 2015) finds: "Minnesota's approach to managing waste focuses too narrowly on recycling, rather than on the full range of waste management activities. The report recommends establishment of reduction and reuse goals that incentivize the waste hierarchy. This means it is preferentially better to reduce, then reuse then recycle products. (someone could submit into record a photo of the waste hierarchy or download this report and provide to councilors <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/sites/default/files/lrw-sw-1sy15.pdf> )
- **Why is Council not acting on Straws and Styrofoam?** Styrofoam has been banned in ME and Vermont, NYC, Minneapolis, St. Paul, St. Louis Park. Its production is recognized as one of the top five creating hazardous materials. Styrofoam is not recyclable.