



27 November 2019

Kevin J. Kelley  
President, Ward 13  
Cleveland City Council  
601 Lakeside Avenue  
Room 220  
Cleveland, OH 44114

Dear Council President Kelley:

On behalf of the Ohio Environmental Council (OEC), I am writing in opposition to recently proposed Cleveland City Council Ordinance No. 1513-2019 which would effectively delay the implementation of the single-use plastic bag ban that was passed by Cuyahoga County Council. This proposed ordinance is problematic and unclear in regards to its intent, approach, and objectives or goals. Currently, the Ohio General Assembly has also proposed legislation that would establish a similar preemption against the County plastic bag ban which would render your proposed ordinance duplicative.

The Cuyahoga County plastic bag ban is a remarkable piece of legislation that gathered input across various coalitions including grocers, community groups, environmental groups, legislators, and more. The impacts of the County plastic bag ban will have a progressive impact on residents and their sustainable behaviors as well as a positive impact on the environment now and for generations to come. I urge you to reconsider holding a vote on Ordinance No. 1513-2019 and allow for the County plastic bag ban to take effect and assess its effectiveness over a fair amount of implementation time.

The proposed City ordinance is problematic because its intent rejects a progressive and sustainability-focused policy that would allow the City and the region to grow – economically and culturally. On the heels of the Sustainable Cleveland 2019 Summit, we need to support and implement with full conviction legislation like the County’s plastic bag ban to demonstrate leadership and vision for a vibrant, clean, and environmentally-conscious Cleveland metro area. The City ordinance undermines this opportunity by technically delaying its implementation through a redundant study group that would waste taxpayer funds. This is not the intent that our leadership should be exuding in a time of opportunistic growth.

The proposed City ordinance is also problematic because its approach rejects the collaboration and consensus achieved by County Councilwoman Sunny Simon, who spearheaded this legislation alongside the County Sustainability Department in consultation with the City’s Department of Sustainability. This legislation was borne out of extensive research, community engagement with a cross-sector of stakeholders during its passage, and consensus that this was an opportunity for the Cleveland metro area to be a leader on protecting our environment and water systems by eliminating single use plastic waste through the long-term implementation of the ban. To oppose this effort would continue a costly and environmentally-detrimental cycle. We should give the ban an opportunity to be fully implemented

and chart the changes in consumer behavior, efficacy, costliness, and environmental impact before unnecessarily delaying it.

Lastly, the proposed ordinance is problematic because its objectives reject the opportunity for the County's plastic bag ban to allow the Cleveland metro region to set statewide precedent and become a national environmental leader on addressing single use plastic bags. Many of the leading metros in the country and globally have banned these single use plastic bags. For Cleveland City Council to potentially reject an effort that was already approved would be regressive. Issues like this and times like these require leadership that is willing to recognize the long-term good over short-term political expediency. It is imperative that you lead our City and region by example and support the existing County plastic bag ban. This legislation will allow for a bolder and more progressive Cleveland, a Cleveland that you and your colleagues envision.

It is my sincere hope that, before you make a final decision that you converse with environmental organizations and other stakeholders who helped pass the County plastic bag ban to see where they are willing to help support and invest time, resources, and money to improving the legislation and its programming. It is critically important that we support and protect collaborative and environmentally-conscious policy.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions at [klaster@theoec.org](mailto:klaster@theoec.org). Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Karlton A. Laster  
Cleveland Metro Director  
Ohio Environmental Council

cc: Heather Taylor-Miesle  
Sunny Simon  
Joseph T. Jones  
Kevin L. Bishop  
Keary McCormack  
Kenneth Johnson  
Phyllis Cleveland  
Blaine A. Griffin  
Basheer S. Jones  
Michael Polensek  
Kevin Conwell  
Anthony T. Hairston  
Dona Brady  
Anthony Brancatelli  
Jasmin Santana  
Matt Zone  
Brian Kazy  
Charles Slife