

Testimony from Brian M. Daniels, Executive Director
H 5358 – Plastic Waste Reduction Act
House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources – March 11, 2021

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. We appreciate Representative McEntee's advocacy on plastic waste reduction, which is a serious issue to many of our cities and towns.

Currently at least seventeen cities and towns in Rhode Island have taken action and passed ordinances to limit the use of plastic bags by retail establishments. These communities have seen firsthand what can happen when plastic bags are not properly disposed of – they end up along the side of the road, in storm drains, on public lands or on our shores.

The League appreciates that the provisions of H 5358 mirror many of the local ordinances that have passed, including the definition of a reusable bag. It also establishes a fine schedule for non-compliance and confirms that the city or town would retain these revenues. This provision assists in generating revenues to cover the costs of enforcement.

One concern about the legislation is that it preempts cities and towns from passing other ordinances related to reusable bags. We believe that local governments should be able to respond to the evolving needs of their communities and pass additional ordinances if they deem them necessary, particularly with regard to definitions and enforcement.

Thank you for your consideration of our views.