

IEM Committee

From: Melissa Takaaze <m.takaaze@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, May 12, 2017 12:04 PM
To: IEM Committee
Subject: Testimony for IEM-12
Attachments: IEM-12_Plastic Bags_Maui_05-12-17.pdf

Dear Committee,

Attached is the Hawaii Food Industry Association's testimony on IEM-12 (plastic bag reduction), which is scheduled on the May 15th agenda.

If there are any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Thanks,

Melissa Takaaze
Director of Grassroots
Hawaii Food Industry Association
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TO: INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
Honorable Committee Chair Elle Cochran
Honorable Committee Vice Chair Don S. Guzman

FROM: HAWAII FOOD INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION
Lauren Zirbel, Executive Director

DATE: May 15, 2017
TIME: 1:30 p.m.

RE: IEM-12

POSITION: OPPOSE

The Hawaii Food Industry Association (HFIA) is comprised of two hundred member companies representing retailers, suppliers, producers, and distributors of food and beverage related products in the State of Hawaii.

It is unclear to us what this bill accomplishes. Is the intent to ban all plastic bags for any purpose? Can we please receive clarification on what this language change will mean for retail businesses and consumers?

"20.18.030 Administration. A. Businesses are prohibited from providing plastic bags to their customers **at the point of sale** for the purpose of transporting groceries or other goods. B. Nothing in this chapter shall preclude a business from making reusable bags or recyclable paper bags available for sale or without charge to its customers **at the point of sale** for the purpose of transporting groceries or other goods."

We do not agree with changing the language to remove durable materials suitable for reuse.

HFIA supports a fee on all single-use carryout bags. Bag fees work to reduce single-use bags by creating a monetary incentive for consumers to invest in and use bags of their own. They avoid complicated bag regulations and allow for a wide range of options for carry out bags. Despite the small price tag, a 10-cent plastic bag fee is enough incentive for most people to start remembering to bring their reusable bags more often. **Business owners have seen their costs increase with the advent of the Maui bag ban, but have not seen more consumers bring reusable bags. A fee is proven to encourage individuals to bring their own bag. Honolulu City Council is very close to passing a bag fee to reduce the use of single-use bags!**

Cities around the world have been implementing bag fees with resounding success. Ireland instituted the first PlasTax in 2002 and reduced single-use bags by 90% in the first year. London implemented a five pence fee (about 15 cents US) at the beginning of 2015 and saw an 85% drop. Other international communities, including India, Rwanda, Washington D.C., show similar reductions of bag use and bag litter as well.

Research suggests that a simple bag fee is particularly effective in reducing bag use. In Australia, where reusable bags are voluntary, one [study](#) found that in stores with no bag fee, shoppers chose single-use bags 67% of the time, while 16% of people chose reusable bags. Only 17% took no bag at all. In contrast, grocery stores with a fee found that consumers chose single-use bags and reusable bags equally 31% of the time, while 39% of shoppers took no bag at all.

After interviews with consumers, the researchers found that when there was no fee, bags were simply given away and consumers didn't think about it. But for customers facing a bag fee, the choice was made evident. Most consumers said monetary impact was not the primary factor in their decision; however, when faced with a fee, the choice to take a bag or not take one became conscious. Most consumers cited their own pre-existing belief in the environmental benefits of reducing bag use as the most important factor in their decision-making process.¹

HFIA supports keeping the existing ban statute the same and adding a mandatory 10-cent fee on the allowed grocery checkout bags. **We do not support expanding the ban on bags to new kinds of bags.**

The bill's changes to statutory definitions are problematic as they are unclear as to what the intent or outcome of such changes would be. Different types of reusable bags are made of many types of materials. The proposed language will cause much confusion.

Mahalo for the opportunity to participate in this important discussion.

¹ <http://1bagatatime.com/learn/bag-fees/>