LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF NEW YORK

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MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT
The New York Packaging Reduction and Recycling Infrastructure Act
S4246B (Harckham)/A5322B (Glick)

To: New York State Assembly and Senate
Re: S4246B (Harckham)/A5322B (Glick)

The League has a long history of education and advocacy in policy making to preserve the environment, natural resources, human health and the right of women and their partners to decide whether and when to create a family, all of which are threatened by the proliferation of product packaging.

Approximately 6% of the world's oil and gas resources are used by the plastic industry with most used for packaging. [1] The volume of product packaging, which will continue to proliferate unless addressed, is often infused with hazardous substances, including endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDCs),[2] posing an immediate and escalating threat to the environment, natural resources, such as our constitutionally guaranteed clean air and water, soil, crops, animal life, human health and the fertility of women and men of child-bearing years. These chemicals persist through the waste treatment and recycling process and can end up in "new" recycled- plastic products. Simply put, once produced, these chemicals do not go away. In humans, they bioaccumulate. A

[1] *Plastics, EDCs & Health: A Guide for Public Interest Organizations and Policy-Makers on Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals & Plastics*, Endocrine Society, December 2020-reference to Forum WEThe new plastics economy-rethinking the future of plastics. 2016.

[2] **The Endocrine System** is a network of glands and organs that produce, store, and secrete hormones. When functioning normally, the endocrine system works with other systems to regulate the body's healthy development and function throughout life.

Endocrine-Disrupting Chemicals (EDCs) are substances in the environment (air, soil, or water supply), food sources and packaging, personal care products and packaging, and manufactured products and packaging that interfere with the normal function of the body's endocrine system. EDCs can enter the body through ingestion and the skin, and as fa- soluble substances become store in body tissue, passed along to gestating fetuses and fed to infants through breast milk.

Endocrine Connection EDCs are chemicals or mixtures of chemicals that interfere with the way the body's hormones work. Some EDCs act like "hormone mimics" and trick the body into thinking that they are hormones, while other EDCs block natural hormones from doing their job. Other EDCs can increase or decrease the levels of hormones in the blood by affecting how they are made, broken down, stored or interact in our body.

EDCs can disrupt many different hormones, which is why they have been linked to numerous adverse human health outcomes including alterations in sperm quality and fertility, abnormalities in sex organs, endometriosis, early puberty, altered nervous system function, immune function, certain cancers, respiratory problems, metabolic issues, diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular problems, growth, neurological and learning disabilities, and more.
https://www.endocrine.org/patient-engagement/endocrine-library/edcs

study performed in 2016 concluded that "EDC exposure in the USA contribute[s] to disease and dysfunction, with annual costs taking up to more than 2% of the GDP.[3]

To properly place responsibility where it belongs, the League fully supports shifting the end-of-life fiscal responsibility for packaging materials management away from taxpayer-funded municipalities and to product producers by establishing a comprehensive statewide Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) program. In addition, the League supports the enforcement of common-sense penalties collected from the industries' failure to comply with the law. In this context, the League supports the passage by the New York State Legislature of The Packaging Reduction & Recycling Infrastructure Act (S4246A/A5322A).

Climate and Waste Crisis

New York State's Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) of 2019 seeks to address climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions to 40% below 1990 levels by 2030 and then to 85% below 1990 levels by 2050. This includes reducing solid waste, which as of 2019 contributed to 11% of all greenhouse gas emissions in New York[4]. Reducing the formidable and otherwise escalating volume of product packaging through the EPR program will have a direct positive impact on the effects of climate change and assist New York in meeting the goals of the CLCPA.

Health Impacts from Product Packaging

The current presence in product packaging of such toxic substances and EDCs as phthalates, bisphenols, polyvinyl chloride and per and polyfluoroalkyl substances (known as "PFAS" or *forever chemicals*) among others, is correctly addressed in the EPR legislation by requiring that packaging exclude the list of fifteen (15) classes of toxic substances within two years following promulgation of the rules and regulations, followed by other toxic substances designated in future years by the EPR legislation's mandated toxic substances committee.

The Packaging Reduction & Recycling Infrastructure Act (S4246A/A5322A).

This proposed legislation would reduce plastic packaging by 50%, gradually over the next twelve years. It would reduce pollution in low-income communities and/or communities of color (environmental justice communities) where packaging is produced, landfilled, and incinerated. As noted above, it would reduce greenhouse gas emissions and make packaging safer for all New Yorkers by prohibiting certain toxic chemicals, including: PFAS, vinyl chloride, lead, mercury, formaldehyde, bisphenols, toluene and others which are used in common food packaging, including baby food. It would save taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars and reinvigorate the state's recycling system. Only 5-6% of plastic waste is actually recycled,[5] and it is most often turned into products or materials of lesser value (downcycled).[6] Because packaging will be reduced, reused, or redesigned to be truly recyclable, recycling facilities will no longer be

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[3] *Plastics, EDCs & Health: A Guide for Public Interest Organizations and Policy-Makers on Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals & Plastics*, Endocrine Society, December 2020-reference to Attina TM, Hauser R, Sathyanarayana S, Hunt PA, Bourguignon JP, Myers JP, DiGangi J, Zoeller RT, Trasande L. *Exposure to endocrine-disrupting chemicals in the USA: a population-based disease burden and cost analysis.* Lancet Diabetes & Endocrinology. 2016; 4(12):996-1003.

[4] https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/administration_pdf/ghgwaste22.pdf

[5] https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/may/04/us-recycling-plastic-waste

[6] https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/why-recycling-isnt-the-answer-to-the-plastic-pollution-problem/

inundated with worthless plastic waste. Additionally, the cost to pay for the management and recycling of packaging waste would fall to companies instead of taxpayers. Finally, the bill doesn't allow chemical "recycling" - a false solution advanced by the plastics industry that creates more pollution - to count as recycling.

For the aforementioned reasons, the League of Women Voters of New York State supports the Packaging Reduction and Recycling Infrastructure Act (S4246B/A5322B) and urges Legislature to pass the bill this session.