

July 1, 2013



County of Santa Barbara Board of Supervisors
105 East Anapamu Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

RE: Agenda Item 5 – Single Use Carryout Bag Ordinance Final EIR

Dear Supervisors:

On behalf of the California Grocers Association (CGA), I applaud the county for considering such an important issue. As you are aware, CGA has worked with dozens of jurisdictions throughout California on a compromise solution that protects the environment and protects retailers – a ban on plastic, charge for paper model. We also commend your commitment to working with the rest of the region and using the BEACON EIR and subsequent draft ordinance so that both Ventura and Santa Barbara County jurisdictions have identical ordinances. This helps our members avoid a patchwork policy, which can be very damaging to our industry.

The California Grocers Association is a non-profit, statewide trade association representing the retail food industry since 1898. CGA represents approximately 500 retail member companies, many of which do business in Santa Barbara County. Collectively our members operate more than 6,000 retail food stores in California. Those outlets represent the breadth of diversity of California's retail food industry and include traditional supermarkets, convenience stores, wholesale merchandisers, and independent supermarkets. CGA represents many of the grocery companies operating in the County.

Dozens of jurisdictions across California have regulated or are in the process of regulating single-use carryout bags. Those successful efforts generally involve a ban on single-use plastic bags and a charge on specified single-use paper bags. This approach taken in other jurisdictions is one that has included robust stakeholder participation and in the end embodies broad consensus on the issue. It is important to note that such a model has become the standard in California. Following what has proven to be an effective and workable approach elsewhere helps increase consistency for businesses with store locations in multiple jurisdictions and for the County's very mobile consumers.

Experience with the Los Angeles County carryout bag ordinance, which bans single-use plastic bags and allows recyclable paper bags for a charge, has shown a dramatic shift in consumer behavior away from single-use carryout bags toward reusable bag use. Industry information is showing an almost immediate flip in consumer behavior with over 70% of consumers either bringing their own bag or choosing no bag at all in the first few weeks of implementation. Over a



period of a few months the amount of consumers choosing not to use a single-use bag has climbed to over 80%. Stores that have seen this policy enacted for even longer periods of time have seen close to 94% of customers bring in reusable bags. This type of regulation is environmentally effective and protects retailers, by allowing them to recoup the costs of providing a much more expensive bag to the customer.

Allowing a small charge for paper bags also protects consumers by providing a low-cost option for unplanned purchases. If a customer comes to a store bringing three reusable bags, but buys four bags of groceries, they have an option of purchasing a paper bag for a ten cent charge, as opposed to spending a \$1.00 on another reusable bag. Grocery stores operate on less than 1% profit margins so every penny counts.

Again, we applaud the County for considering this very important issue and we urge you to consider the ban on plastic, charge for paper model. With your participation, we hope to spur statewide action, as a statewide solution for California will be the most impactful for the environment. We look forward to working with you throughout this process.

Thank You,

Sarah Paulson Sheehy
Director, Local Government Relations

cc: Chandra L. Waller, County Executive Officer