

# H.869/S.579

## OMNIBUS SINGLE USE PLASTICS

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For a thriving New England



### HOT TOPIC

#### The Plastics Industry and Environmental Justice

The hazardous impacts from plastic pollution are not borne equally by all. Across the U.S., people of color are 75% more likely to live near polluting facilities like petrochemical plants, while 80% of waste incinerators are in Environmental Justice communities – communities of color and low-income populations that are too frequently saddled with sources of air and water pollution. Petrochemical plants making plastics, and incinerators burning those plastics, emit pollutants near homes, schools, and hospitals in these neighborhoods, contributing to high asthma rates, lead poisoning, cancers, and a host of other health effects. The truth is, single-use bottles, cups, bags, straws, and plastic packaging come at a cost; and much of that cost is paid by those whose voices have historically been ignored.

Our country is in a waste crisis. In a consumer-driven convenience culture, single-use items have become the norm. Common single-use items such as plastic bags, are not recyclable and typically end up in landfills and incinerators, or littered in our oceans – damaging human health and the environment. **H.869/S.579, “An Act to Reduce Single-Use Plastics from the Environment,”** would ban single-use plastics, including plastic bags and single serve plastic water bottles, among many others. The goal is to reduce the number of single-use plastics and remove them from our waste stream.

### The Challenges

#### Single-Use Plastics

Recycling systems in Massachusetts are overwhelmed with non-recyclable, single-use plastics. Plastic bags, straws, nips, polystyrene cups and take-out containers, hotel toiletries, and black plastic, are often confused as recyclable items because they are labeled as such. But really, they end up contaminating single-stream curbside recycling systems. Many of these disposables, particularly straws and nips, are too small to sort on conveyor belts of recycling centers. And black plastic items are full of harmful chemicals known to cause serious health issues like cancer, infertility, and developmental issues.

#### Plastic Water Bottles

Bottled water is the most consumed packaged beverage product in the United States. In 2019 alone, nearly 14.4 billion gallons of bottled water were sold. This is a 70% increase from sales only ten years prior. But single-use plastic water bottles are unnecessary and wasteful. Only 30% of plastic water bottles are recycled in the U.S each year. The remaining 70% is either landfilled, incinerated, or littered throughout our environment. What’s more, single-use plastic bottles are the 3rd largest source of plastic pollution in our oceans.

#### No Market

Single-use plastics, such as black plastics and polystyrene, do not have a global market. There are no safe, efficient ways to recycle or reuse these plastics and they will inevitably continue to end up in our landfills and incinerators.

#### Plastic Wipes

Single-use plastic wipes are responsible for massively clogging and damaging Massachusetts’ sewer systems. They are often marketed as “flushable,” leading consumers to dispose of them improperly.

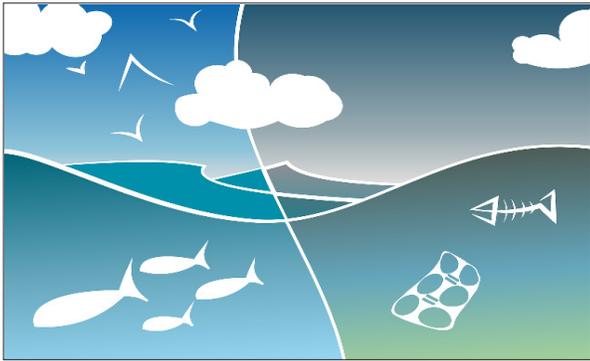
#### Balloons

When released into the air, balloons end up in our oceans and on our coastlines. They inevitably make their way into the stomachs of marine animals and other wildlife, eventually killing them and disrupting our ecosystems.

# SOLUTIONS AND BENEFITS

## The Solution

The most efficient way to reduce plastic pollution is to prevent it from being made and used in the first place. H.896/S.579, "An Act to Reduce Single-Use Plastics from the Environment," would ban plastic grocery bags, polystyrene, black plastics, single serve plastic water bottles, hotel toiletries, nips, plastic wipes, and balloon releases. Plastic straws would still be available upon request and a charge would be implemented for plastic utensils. This would incentivize people to use reusables instead, and reserve plastic straws for people with disabilities who are dependent on them for everyday needs. All of these single-use plastics have reusable, sustainable alternatives that are easy to implement for regular use.



What's more, a ban on single-use plastics in the Commonwealth would decrease the amount of waste cities and towns generate. That means cities and towns could reduce recycling and waste costs. Plus, single-stream recycling would have less contamination and sorting out recyclable plastics would be more efficient. There would be less litter on streets and cleaner, brighter communities.

## Join CLF Today!

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## Learn More

Visit CLF's website to learn more about how we're working to address New England's waste problem. [clf.org/making-an-impact/zero-waste/](http://clf.org/making-an-impact/zero-waste/)

## The Benefits

### Cleaner Communities

In San Jose, CA, municipal studies showed there was a significant decrease in bag litter in waterways and creeks after they implemented a single-use plastic bag ban and a 10-cent fee on paper bags.

### Climate Change Mitigation

Single-use plastics depend on the extraction of fossil fuels to be produced, a major contributor to climate change. The demand for incinerators and landfills also decreases.

### Taxpayer Savings

Removing non-recyclable single-use plastics from the waste stream will lower costs of recycling for cities and towns across the Commonwealth. Funds can be reallocated into other areas such as public parks, schools, and sustainability efforts.

### What is CLF Doing?

CLF's Zero Waste Project is fighting back against single-use plastics by working to create a sustainable, circular economy that relies on reusable products and packaging. We are advocating for legislation and initiatives throughout New England to limit plastics.



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