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Testimony before the House Committee On Energy and Environment

By: Shawn Miller, Northwest Grocery Association

To: Chair Helm
Vice-Chairs Reschke and Schouten
Honorable Members of the House Committee on Energy and Environment

The Northwest Grocery Association supports HB 2509, which creates a sustainable shopping policy for the State of Oregon. The two key components that will make the policy work are the inclusion of a required pass through fee on recycled paper bags and a ban on plastic bags for all retailers at the check-out counter. NWGA opposes a plastic bag ban policy that does not incorporate a required pass through fee provision on recycled paper bags.

The overall objective of HB 2509 is to implement a statewide solution to single-use plastic bags by reducing their consumption and lessening their pervasiveness among overall litter in Oregon. Our support for this bill is a commitment to do more for our environment and our full support hinges on the inclusion of the pass through fee for a recyclable bag. The fee helps achieve the goal of the policy in the following ways:

- It is a gentle reminder to the consumer to remember their reusable bags without being punitive.
- It is avoidable and not a tax or fee paid to the government.
- It protects the retailer and the consumer that uses reusable bags from the cost shift of going from plastic to paper bags.
- It allows a retailer to provide an inexpensive, environmentally friendly bag when a customer does not have a reusable bag with them.
- It is refundable when the consumer reuses the recycled paper bag with a grocery purchase.

Making the 40% recyclable paper bag available provides consumers a choice or back-up at checkout. However, the pass through fee on paper bags encourages the consumer to use a reusable bag or recycle a bag they already have, including a previously-used paper bag. Cities throughout the Northwest that have implemented these policies to encourage reusable bag use show positive results in the change of consumer behavior.

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In addition, merely banning plastic and allowing paper bags without a pass through fee increases grocery costs an estimate of \$35,000 to \$60,000 per store per year, depending on the size of the store. Paper bags are simply more expensive. If there is no pass through fee for consumer use, customers who bring reusable bags will pay more for their groceries to subsidize those who want “free” paper bags. The bottom line is not providing an incentive to move to reusable bags will raise retailers’ bag costs by at least 40% and will simply shift the problem from one single-use bag to another.

In conclusion, NWGA supports HB 2509. Its passage would be a win-win for the environmental and business communities.

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