



## Memorandum of Support

### *Reusable Bag Incentive*

Over the last few decades, the issue of disposable bag pollution has become a global concern. Plastic and paper bags have become ubiquitous part of daily life, and are taking a toll on our environment and our economy. According to the EPA, between 500 billion and a trillion plastic bags are consumed worldwide each year, and each of those bags is used for an average of 12 minutes. These bags, which never fully break down, end up in our landfills, parks, beaches, along roadways, parking lots and in our waterways. Disposable bags are harmful, wasteful, costly, and unnecessary. **CCE urges the Legislature to make New York State a leader by placing a 5 cent charge on disposable plastic and paper bags at check-out counters.** Revenue generated from disposable bag fees should be used to help address environmental problems.

Disposable bags cause significant problems to our environment and economy, and their free giveaway comes at a significant cost to society:

- U.S. retailers spend approximately \$4 billion annually to purchase disposable bags, which is passed on to the consumer in the form of higher prices.
- Municipalities are also spending millions of dollars to dispose of plastic bags, for example NYC spends \$10 million annually to dispose of plastic bags.
- Disposable bags often end up as unsightly litter in our communities, and when it rains, this litter is swept into storm drains blocking them and causing infrastructure damage and localized flooding.
- Recent studies have found high levels of plastics in the Great Lakes and oceans, and thousands of plastic bags are being found on throughout NY beaches.

Voluntary efforts by businesses and consumers to simply switch to reusable bags are an important start, but state-wide action is needed. Policies enacted by municipalities and countries to place a fee on disposable bags have proven highly effective at reducing disposable bag use, while increasing the use of reusable bags.

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### **CCE SUPPORTS A REUSABLE BAG INCENTIVE IN THE SFY 2014-15 BUDGET**

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*CCE is an 80,000 member non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organization that works to empower communities and advocate solutions that protect public health and the natural environment.*