From: Morgan Sandau
To: Grp. City Council and City Web Site
Subject: Plastic Bag Ban
Date: Sunday, November 29, 2020 8:32:03 PM

Dear Missoula City Council Members,

I'm writing to you today in regards to plastic bags. As you may know, plastic bags are an exponentially growing problem and disastrous for the environment. Each year 300 million plastic bags make their way into the ocean. Plastic breaks down into microplastics and animals consume these tiny pieces, mistaking them for small fish. When animals' stomachs fill with plastic, they slowly starve to death, lacking actual sustenance. Over a million marine animals die each year just due to plastic related ingestion or entanglement.

According to the United Nations' Environmental sector, as of 2019, only 9.4% of plastic bags ever created had actually been recycled. The average American household currently uses about 1500 plastic bags every year. A single person on average produces 24.27 pounds of waste in plastic bags every year. This amount has proven itself to be immensely disastrous and should be reduced. Even though Missoula is a moderately environmentally conscious place, in the big scheme of things, we could do with some improvements. We have over 74,000 people. This means Missoula alone contributes to about 903 tons of waste in plastic bags every year; a small city, but a large impact.

Is there a possibility of getting a ban on plastic bags in stores? Even in a few areas this could drastically reduce our current overall toll on the environment.

Alternatives to plastic bags include both cloth bags and paper bags. Some stores use paper bags already which is great, but most still use plastic. Paper does have its downsides; because it is less durable it is more likely to need replacement, which in turn boosts its quantity and impact on the environment. Despite this fault, paper bags are significantly better for the environment overall. They break down faster and they have a much lower impact in the off chance they end up in the ocean. Paper bags recycle more easily as well. The other option is cloth bags. Cloth bags are the best option for stores, but obviously this isn't a feasible option during a pandemic. In the future, cloth bags could

be the main type of bag, but as of now, paper bags are the safest option.

As a student in high school and a member of an eco-club, I'm very concerned about the well-being and survival of our planet. Through the research I've done over the past few years of my life, I have found that much of the problems humans create for the environment, especially those involving plastic, could be prevented if only a few more places of power would construct and enforce a law to create change and spread awareness. I want to do what I can while I know that I can, so I urge you to help me and those who agree with the ideals I do to do something about this awful situation by enforcing a ban on plastic bags. The ocean is currently filled with an estimated 100 million tons of plastic. We need to stop the problem at its source before it is too late for the planet and the ecosystem dies. Missoula might be small, but there are eight states in the U.S. that have already banned single-use plastic bags. This list includes California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Delaware, Maine, New York, Oregon, and Vermont. Maybe other cities can learn from us and do the same. Maybe we can reach the state. I'd love to be on the list of countries that have banned them.

Thank you.

Morgan Sandau

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