



**American
Forest & Paper
Association**

June 24, 2016

Senate Environment and Energy Committee
New Jersey State Legislature
State House Annex
Trenton, NJ 08608

RE: Senate Bill 2349- An Act concerning the use of single-use carryout bags in stores

Dear Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Greenstein, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the American Forest & Paper Association (AF&PA)ⁱ, we appreciate the opportunity to share our concerns with legislation under consideration by the Committee on the Act concerning the use of single-use carryout bags in stores. Our specific concerns include those provisions that impose a tax on paper bags. **We respectfully oppose this ordinance and urge you to amend the language to remove the 5-cent tax for paper bags.**

AF&PA is active on this issue in states and localities across the country. We believe that all paper bags should be excluded from measures to tax retail bags on grounds that they wrongfully penalize an environmentally friendly product that is highly recycled, recyclable, compostable and reusable. The bag tax implies that paper bags are part of the environmental problem, rather than the solution.

Thanks to the continuing efforts of AF&PA members and the millions of individuals who recycle at home, work and school every day, the paper and packaging industry has achieved a consistently high recovery rate. In 2015, a record 66.8 percent of all paper consumed in the U.S. was recovered for recycling, and the recovery rate has met or exceeded 63 percent for the past seven years. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, more paper (by weight) is recovered for recycling from municipal solid waste streams than glass, plastic, steel and aluminum combined. In 2014, 96 percent of the U.S. population had access to community curbside and/or drop-off paper recycling services. In New Jersey, 98 percent of all residents have access to community curbside recycling. Paper recovery is an environmental success story, saving an average of 3.3 cubic yards of landfill space for each ton of paper recycled. Paper recovery has fostered a dynamic marketplace that allows recovered fiber to find its highest-value end use in manufacturing new paper and paperboard. That, in turn, helps to encourage more recycling.

Consumers who are sensitive to environmental concerns choose paper bags. Responding to consumer demands, many retailers have already voluntarily transitioned

to paper. Not only are paper bags already made from recycled paper, they are highly recycled themselves and are a fixture in community recycling programs throughout the state and the rest of the country.

Offering a paper bag free of charge at the point of purchase is a natural part of customer service. In fact, many services are already included in the price of the goods consumers buy, such as rent, electricity, insurance and employee wages. There is nothing preventing grocery and retail establishments from charging for any one of these services, including paper bags.

We look forward to continuing our work with the Committee and the State of New Jersey. Please contact Abigail Turner, Manager, State Government Affairs, AF&PA at (202) 463-2596 or abigail_turner@afandpa.org for further information.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Bartheld
Vice President, Government Affairs
American Forest & Paper Association

CC: New Jersey Senate Environment and Energy Committee

¹ AF&PA is the national trade association for the forest products industry, representing pulp, paper, packaging, tissue, and wood products manufacturers, and forest landowners. Our companies make products essential for everyday life from renewable and recyclable resources that sustain the environment. The forest products industry accounts for approximately 4 percent of the total U.S. manufacturing GDP, manufactures approximately \$210 billion in products annually, and employs nearly 900,000 men and women. The industry meets a payroll of approximately \$50 billion annually and is among the top 10 manufacturing sector employers in 47 states.

In New Jersey, the industry employs more than 13,500 individuals, with an annual payroll of over \$1.1 billion. The estimated state and local taxes paid by the forest products industry totals \$133 million annually.