



March 22, 2016

The Honorable William R. Spencer, MD  
Suffolk County Legislator, District 18  
15 Park Circle, Suite 209  
Centerport, NY 11721

Dear Dr. Spencer:

On behalf of the American Forest & Paper Association<sup>i</sup> (AF&PA) and the Renewable Bag Council<sup>ii</sup> (RBC), I am writing to express concern with certain provisions of Resolution 1207. Specifically, those provisions that impose a tax and recycled content mandate on paper bags. **We respectfully oppose this ordinance and urge you to amend the language to remove the 10-cent tax and recycled content requirements for paper bags.**

AF&PA and the RBC are active on this issue in states and localities across the country. We believe that paper bags should be excluded from measures aimed at banning plastic carryout bags on grounds that they wrongfully penalize our product—a commodity that is highly recycled, recyclable, compostable and renewable.

Government imposed product taxes not only increase costs for consumers, but can substantially distort the free flow of recoverable commodities, such as paper. This proposed tax unfairly targets paper products and implies that a product that is recyclable, compostable, made of recycled material, and reusable, is part of the environmental problem rather than the solution.

In addition to discouraging consumers from choosing an environmentally sustainable option, this proposed tax on paper bags places yet another burden on the hard working citizens of Long Island by increasing the cost of basic necessities that disproportionately impacts low-income families.

Paper recovery is an environmental success story. Not only does recycling paper save landfill space (3.3 cubic yards on average per ton recycled), but recycled paper has fostered a dynamic marketplace in which recovered fiber finds its highest-value end use in the manufacturing of new paper and paperboard products. This cycle of recovery and reuse creates natural market dynamics that only encourages more recycling. Adding a tax, while artificially increasing the recycled content required for paper bags, distorts this cycle by dis-incentivizing the use of environmentally beneficial products, in turn decreasing their recovery and limiting the availability of recovered fiber use in new products. .

With more than 96 percent of the U.S. population having access to community curbside and/or drop-off paper recycling services in 2014, 65.4 percent of all paper consumed in the U.S. was recovered for recycling. 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.

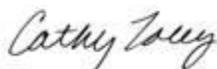
Legislator William Spencer  
March 22, 2016  
Page 2

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 working with you on this language. Please feel free to contact TJ Struhs, Manager, Government Affairs, AF&PA at (202) 463-2433 or [tj\\_struhs@afandpa.org](mailto:tj_struhs@afandpa.org) for further information.

Sincerely,



Cathy Foley  
Group Vice President

cc: Suffolk County Legislature

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<sup>i</sup> 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. Visit AF&PA online at [www.afandpa.org](http://www.afandpa.org) or follow us on Twitter @ForestandPaper.

<sup>ii</sup> The Renewable Bag Council (RBC) is comprised of manufacturers and converters of renewable, recycled, recyclable and compostable Kraft paper used for checkout bags at grocery and retail outlets throughout New York and across the United States. The RBC is affiliated with AF&PA. Visit the RBC online at [www.renewablebag.org](http://www.renewablebag.org) or follow us on Twitter @renewablebag.