

Testimony in Support of the Packaging Reduction and Recycling Infrastructure Act

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My name is Lauren Sweeney, and I'm the CEO of DeliverZero. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the importance of the Packaging Reduction and Recycling Infrastructure Act (Senate Bill S4246A, Assembly Bill A5322A).

In order to keep global warming beneath the threshold set by the Paris Agreement, plastics production must be reduced by an estimated 75%. Plastics are not just a climate problem: they threaten human health and the natural environment in a way that exacerbates existing inequalities.

It is scientifically impossible to continue current levels of packaging production while adequately addressing the harms created by single-use packaging. Such a feat would require magic, not science.

The good news is that grounded, real world packaging reduction solutions are already being implemented here in New York State, proving that reduction through reuse is possible.

Several businesses that started in New York, including my own, offer a glimpse into a future in which reuse is the norm. My company makes it possible for businesses of all sizes to offer their customers returnable reusable packaging. Our tech integrates across point of sale systems and third-party delivery apps, such as DoorDash, Toast, Uber, and ChowNow—systems customers are used to. We use machine learning to track packaging and to create easy and efficient return options for customers.

It is more cost-efficient, more resource-efficient, and less emissions-intensive to sanitize packaging and reuse it than to recycle it. While recycling is part of the solution, recycling entails significant energy consumption, financial costs, and lost materials. These bills appropriately prioritize reuse and pass the costs of recycling onto producers, rather than taxpayers.

Focusing on the sanitization and reuse of packaging will decrease emissions, conserve resources, and create cost efficiencies.

As a single, working mom, I started my business to make reuse accessible to other time and resource constrained people who need access to convenience but who also worry about the harm created by hard-to-avoid single-use packaging.

In operating my business for the last four years, I've seen firsthand that people want access to truly sustainable options. They are concerned about climate change and toxic chemicals.

These bills acknowledge that short term fixes for these problems undermine real solutions. Chemical or advanced recycling is not the answer. Substituting plastics for other single-use materials is not the answer. Turning discarded plastics into boat fuels likely to cause cancer is not the answer, either.

Reduction is the answer. It's the most empathetic way forward, and it opens doors to new business models that already show real promise.

New York State has the opportunity to pass the most meaningful packaging reduction bill in the United States to date. During the coming session, please pass these bills without further delay; it is not hyperbolic to say our lives depend on it.

Thank you for your leadership, Senator Harckham and Assemblywoman Glick.