

**Testimony of Conor Bambrick
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Jointly Before the
New York State Senate and Assembly
Environmental Conservation Committees

Hearing on Packaging Reduction

October 24, 2023
Albany, New York

On behalf of the board and staff of Environmental Advocates NY, it is my pleasure to offer our testimony to the New York State Senate and Assembly Environmental Conservation Committees in support of the Packaging Reduction and Recycling Infrastructure Act (S4246A / A5322A) which will establish a comprehensive Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) program that will reduce packaging waste, establish environmental standards for packaging, and shift the financial burden from taxpayers and municipalities to the businesses responsible for the waste.

Environmental Advocates' mission is to protect the air, land, water, and health of all New Yorkers. Plastic waste is a direct threat to all of these pillars of sustainability in all parts of its supply chain. An average of 6.8 million tons of packaging waste is produced each year in New York, constituting 40% of the total waste stream.¹ Most of this packaging is sent to landfills, burned in incinerators, or winds up as litter on our streets and beaches. Litter that washes into streams, rivers, and ultimately the ocean amounts to approximately 11 million metric tons of plastic pollution entering the ocean each year,² the equivalent of a garbage truck dumping its load into the ocean every minute.

The volume of curbside materials has increased over time with the proliferation of single-use convenience packaging, more packaging component parts, and increased consumer delivery and online ordering habits placing an enormous strain on municipal curbside recycling programs. Nearly all packaging that cannot be reused or effectively recycled is made of plastic. New York City alone spends \$432 million in taxpayer money each year to export its waste to incinerators and landfills. The collapse of markets for recycled materials has led to increased costs of disposing of solid waste, increased the volume of materials being landfilled or incinerated, and significantly impacted the economic viability of recycling programs across the state.

Emissions from waste sector make up 12% of the state's greenhouse gas inventory. When we refer to greenhouse gas emissions from the waste sector, we are often referring to methane emissions from organic matter in landfills. However, plastics have a significant carbon footprint

¹ Beyond Plastics: <https://www.beyondplastics.org/events/5-25-23-online-action-party>

² United Nations: <https://www.unep.org/interactives/pollution-to-solution/>