



January 23, 2024

Senator Mike Thompson, Chair
Senate Committee on Federal and State Affairs
Room: 144-S
Topeka, KS 66612

Re: House Bill 2446

Dear Senator Thompson and Committee Members,

City Hall

6 East 6th Street
PO Box 708
Lawrence, KS 66044

785-832-3000
lawrenceks.org

MAYOR

Bart Littlejohn

VICE MAYOR

Mike Dever

COMMISSIONERS

Lisa Larsen
Brad Finkeldei
Amber Sellers

I am writing on behalf of the City of Lawrence to oppose House Bill 2446, prohibiting local regulation of plastic containers, and urge the committee to reject this over-reaching legislation. While we appreciate your efforts to balance issues critical to our state, our locally elected officials are accountable to the voters for the decisions they make on behalf of our community. House Bill 2446 would erode the Home Rule authority of Kansas cities, granted by the people in this State in 1960 through amendment to the Kansas Constitution, and remove our ability to be responsive to an issue our community has prioritized.

The City of Lawrence embraces our community commitment to environmental sustainability. We maintain a deep respect for our place in relationship with the planet and environment, as highlighted in our Strategic Plan, and our community would like to pursue a high quality of life for our residents and environment without undue restrictions of the State. A group of fourth grade students from our community elevated the issue of harmful plastics a few years ago to the City Commission. Since then we have researched the local impacts of single-use plastics, including infiltration of local waterways (Clinton Lake and the Kansas River); challenges in the City's recycling facility that increase operational costs; the infiltration of sewers and drainage ditches, making storm water run-off less efficient; and being a particularly unattractive source of litter that gets stuck in trees and vegetation. There are also impacts to livestock and wildlife from accidental consumption. Plastics further have human health implications, with an increasing volume of research indicating a possibility of endocrine system disruption associated with the decomposition of plastic products.

City officials have heard from more than 700 people in Lawrence who feel strongly about this issue and have worked to strike a balance with local retailers. We are using their feedback, along with research findings, to develop a strategy to reduce single-use plastic bags and improve the quality of life in our community.

The City of Lawrence respectfully requests that the Committee acknowledge the importance of local government retaining control over issues such as those covered by House Bill 2446 and refrain from passing House Bill 2446, as amended, out of committee.

Sincerely,

Craig S. Owens
City Manager

CC: Mayor and City Commission

