



City of Lawrence

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February 18, 2020

Representative Sean Tarwater, Chair
Commerce, Labor and Economic Development
Room: 151-S
Topeka, KS 66612

Re: House Bill 2625

Dear Representative Tarwater and Committee Members,

I am writing on behalf of the City of Lawrence to oppose House Bill 2625 and urge the committee to reject this pre-emptive legislation. While we appreciate your efforts to balance critical issues to our state, our locally elected officials are accountable to the voters for the decisions they make on behalf of our community. House Bill 2625 would erode the Home Rule Authority of Kansas cities, granted by the people in this State in 1960 through an amendment to the Kansas Constitution, and remove our ability to be responsive to an issue our community has prioritized.

Our community would like to pursue a high quality of life for our residents and environment without undue oversight and restrictions of the State. A group of fourth grade students from our community elevated the issue of harmful plastics almost two 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, increasing operational costs; getting into 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. Plastics have human health implications, with increasing numbers of research indicating a possibility of endocrine system disruption associated with the decomposition of plastic products. We have heard from over 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 waste and improve the quality of life in our community.

Over 30 countries have taken federal-level action to curtail the soaring problem of single-use plastics and expanded polystyrene. It is critical for local government to retain control over these types of issues in absence of state or federal action.

Sincerely,

Craig S. Owens
City Manager

C: Mayor and City Commission

