ASSEMBLY JOINT RESOLUTION
No. 230

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JUNE 1, 2021

Sponsored by:
Assemblyman JOHN F. MCKEON
District 27 (Essex and Morris)
Assemblywoman VALERIE VAINIERI HUTTLE
District 37 (Bergen)
Assemblyman ROBERT J. KARABINCHAK
District 18 (Middlesex)

Co-Sponsored by:
Assemblywoman Timberlake

SYNOPSIS

Designates May of each year as “Bag Up NJ Month.”

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 6/21/2021)

A JOINT RESOLUTION designating May of each year as "Bag Up NJ Month."

WHEREAS, Since 1950, global annual production of plastics has increased from two million tons to over 381 million tons; and

WHEREAS, Approximately one-third of all plastics produced are single-use plastics, which are plastics designed to be used only once and then thrown away; and

WHEREAS, Most single-use plastics are disposed of in landfills, are incinerated, or become litter in the State's waterways and oceans; and

WHEREAS, Plastics released in the environment do not biodegrade, but instead break down into smaller pieces, known as microplastics, which accumulate in the natural environment and are eaten by fish and other marine life; and

WHEREAS, Plastics have been known to cause death or reproductive failure in sea turtles, birds, and other organisms that ingest plastic; and

WHEREAS, Single-use plastic waste creates visual pollution, degrades water quality, and impacts the tourism, fishing, and shipping industries, all of which are major contributors to the New Jersey economy; and

WHEREAS, Single-use paper carryout bags use as much or more energy and resources to manufacture and transport as single-use plastic carryout bags and contribute to harmful air emissions; and

WHEREAS, To address the consequences associated with the use of single-use plastic, on November 4, 2020, the State of New Jersey enacted P.L.2020, c.117 (C.13:1E-99. 126 et seq.) phasing out single-use plastic and paper bags, among other single-use products, and encouraging the use of reusable bags throughout the State; and

WHEREAS, As a result of this new law, beginning on May 4, 2022, no store or food service business will provide or sell a single-use plastic carryout bag to a customer, and no grocery store will provide or sell a single-use paper carryout bag to a customer; and

WHEREAS, Banning or limiting the use of single-use plastic and paper carryout bags is a significant step in the State's efforts to reduce reliance on single-use products; and

WHEREAS, The New Jersey Clean Communities Council, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, the New Jersey Department of State, policymakers, environmental and business groups, as well as other stakeholders, are working together to educate consumers, businesses, and communities about the recently enacted State law and the benefits of utilizing reusable bags, however, additional education and public awareness is needed in order to create widespread change in bag use among New Jersey residents; and

WHEREAS, The State would benefit from a month designated each year to bringing public awareness towards the use of reusable bags and the importance of improving the current state of the environment; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

1. May of each year is designated as "Bag Up NJ Month."

2. The Governor is respectfully requested to annually issue a proclamation calling upon public officials and the citizens of New Jersey to observe "Bag Up NJ Month" with appropriate activities and programs.

3. This joint resolution shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This joint resolution designates May of each year as "Bag Up NJ Month."

Significant increases in global plastic production and a lack of proper recycling has resulted in negative environmental consequences and adverse health outcomes for fish and marine life. Single-use plastics, which are plastics designed to be used only once and then thrown away, are often disposed of in landfills, are incinerated, or become litter in the State's waterways and oceans. Plastics released in the environment do not biodegrade, but instead break down into smaller pieces, known as microplastics, which accumulate in the natural environment and are eaten by fish and other marine life. Single use plastic waste also creates visual pollution, degrades water quality, and impacts the tourism, fishing, and shipping industries, all of which are major contributors to the New Jersey economy.

To address the consequences associated with the use of single-use plastic and prevent further damage from the use of single-use plastic, the State enacted P.L.2020, c.117 (C.13:1E-99.126 et seq.) phasing out single-use plastic and paper bags, among other single-use products, and encouraging the use of reusable bags throughout the State. As a result of this new law, beginning on May 4, 2022, no store or food service business will provide or sell a single-use plastic carryout bag to a customer, and no grocery store will provide or sell a single-use paper carryout bag to a customer. Although banning or limiting the use of single-use plastic and paper carryout bags is a significant step in the State's efforts to reduce reliance on single-use products, education and public awareness is required in order to create widespread change in bag use among New Jersey

residents. For this reason, this joint resolution would designate May of each year as "Bag Up NJ Month."

Designating May of each year as "Bag Up NJ Month," would allow the public to become more educated concerning the benefits of utilizing reusable bags, what options of reusable bags are available, and the importance of improving the current state of the environment. During this month, appropriate activities and programs, such as educational programs, public and media engagement, and reusable bag distribution programs, may be utilized to bring awareness to this subject and promote change in the use of carryout bags by the State's residents.