

**CITIZENS
CAMPAIGN**
FOR THE ENVIRONMENT



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Empowering Communities, Advocating Solutions.

July 15, 2021

Mr. Doug McMillon, CEO
Walmart Inc.
702 SW 8th St.
Bentonville, AR 72712

Re: Connecticut's Single-Use Plastic Bag Ban

Dear Mr. McMillon,

Citizens Campaign for the Environment (CCE) is a non-partisan, non-profit organization working to advance sound science and good environmental policy at the state and local levels. We do this work through public education, research, and lobbying, and are supported by more than 120,000 members in Connecticut and New York.

CCE and our allies in Connecticut are troubled by Walmart's decision to provide its CT retail locations with slightly thicker plastic bags. This is a blatant work-around to the statewide plastic bag ban that went into effect on July 1. Single-use plastic bags are a wasteful, unnecessary habit, they are detrimental to our environment, present a hazard to human health and cost taxpayers money. For these reasons, CCE supports policies that reduce our dependence on single-use plastics and promote the use of safer, more environmentally friendly reusable bags.

The intent of the CT bag ban is to create a shift in consumer behavior –*the objective is to incentivize shoppers to bring their own bags when they go to the store*. In other states, this common-sense approach has dramatically reduced single-use plastics that unnecessarily pollute our environment, threaten marine ecosystems, and create costly infrastructure problems. Walmart's ill-advised policy of offering customers a bag that just barely exceeds the limits of the ban defeats the purpose of this law and sets an irresponsible and damaging example for other retailers to follow.

It is very concerning that Walmart's brand promotes itself publicly as a "zero-waste" company, acknowledges the need to reduce plastic pollution and claim to have taken strides to provide safer, healthier alternatives to shoppers. In practice, Walmart's policy of continuing to offer plastic bags stands in direct conflict with your branding. By exploiting loopholes in several bag bans (including in the States of Connecticut, Colorado, and South Carolina), you undermine your environmental credibility and put our environment at risk.

CCE is a member of the Coalition for a Safe and Healthy Connecticut, and an active participant in the national “Mind the Store” campaign. We were pleased to see Walmart receive an A-grade in the 2021 retailer report card, putting it among the top 5 scores out of 50 retailers ranked¹. However, Walmart has much work to do to *maintain* that position. We believe that this new policy damages your company’s standing as a leader on safer products, and we are calling Walmart publicly to embrace Connecticut’s efforts to eliminate disposable checkout bags.

Connecticut is a coastal state with a deep cultural connection to the Long Island Sound. It was the first state to prohibit plastic microbeads in personal care products in 2015, in an effort to protect our precious waterways from toxic plastic pollution. This policy was replicated and adopted at the national level later that year. In 2018, the CT General Assembly created a Microfiber Working Group, to study the issue of how plastic microfibers impact the marine environment, and to recommend strategies to limit the release of microplastics from household products.

The movement to combat plastic ocean pollution in our state has grown by leaps and bounds, culminating in the passage of a budget measure which set a timeline to phase-out conventional plastic checkout bags in 2019. ***While the letter of this law only applies to plastic bags up to 4 mils in thickness, the spirit of the policy is to create a lasting, meaningful change in consumer behavior.*** Walmart’s decision to provide so-called “reusable” plastic bags threatens to undo the tremendous progress made in recent years towards changing consumer behavior/educating the public about the dangers of plastic pollution.

We are calling upon Walmart to be a good neighbor, and to establish itself as a leader among the retail community by doing away with wasteful plastic bags at the checkout counter. We urge your company to not exploit a loophole, but rather to go above and beyond the requirements of the CT bag ban, which have largely been embraced by members of the retail community and consumers alike. According to the CT Food Association, grocery stores in Connecticut have made significant progress in implementing this new policy and some stores are reporting 90% of their customers bringing reusable bags².

In closing, we urge you to cease your practice of offering plastic bags in Connecticut and consider phasing-out the distribution of plastic checkout bags nationally. After careful consideration of the [impacts plastic pollution can have on our oceans and estuaries](#), we are confident you will agree that businesses and industry must do more to help in the fight against plastic pollution. We appreciate your time and careful consideration and look forward to working with your company to achieve this important goal.

Respectfully,



Louis Rosado Burch
Connecticut Program Director

¹ <https://retailerreportcard.com/>

² <https://www.nbcconnecticut.com/news/local/single-use-plastic-bag-ban-to-soon-replace-fee-in-ct/2510656/>

Undersigned,

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