



PO Box 654
Lawrence, KS 66044
KansasInterfaithAction.org

Rabbi Moti Rieber, Executive Director
Rev. Rachael Pryor, Board Chair

<https://kansasinterfaithaction.org>
mrieber@kansasinterfaithaction.org
(913) 232-2336

Written Testimony by Rabbi Moti Rieber, Executive Director

In opposition to SB47 — Prohibiting cities and counties from regulating consumer merchandise and auxiliary containers for the consumption, transportation or protection of consumer merchandise.

Senate Committee on Commerce, Sen. Renee Erickson, chair - January 31, 2023

Mme. Chair, Ranking Member Holland, members of the committee:

My name is Rabbi Moti Rieber; I am Executive Director of Kansas Interfaith Action, a statewide, multifait issue advocacy organization that represents mostly Mainline Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities on a variety of important issues. As the State Public Policy office of the Central States Synod of the ELCA Lutheran Church, I am also testifying on behalf of the Kansas chapter of Lutherans Restoring Creation, in opposition to SB 47.

The denominations and faith communities that make up Kansas Interfaith Action take, as the very core of our mission, care of God’s Creation. Our opposition to this bill is based on three points:

First, single use plastic is a significant solid waste problem for cities and counties, and regulating it is a completely sensible and justifiable policy. Cities face an increasing crisis of plastic pollution, most of which comes from the food and beverage industry. They face costs associated with plastic pollution, including extra landfill costs, community clean-up, and jamming of equipment or infrastructure.

Single-use plastic is bad for the environment. It’s extremely energy intensive to produce, contributing to our ongoing climate crisis. The recycling rates are extremely low even for the kinds of plastic that can be recycled (not all can), and plastic containers don’t biodegrade. Replacements are easily available.

Over 200 counties and municipalities have enacted ordinances either imposing a fee on single use plastic or banning it outright. Several countries, including France and India, have done the same. They are responding a real issue, and our Kansas municipalities should not be prevented from responding to that same need.

The second reason we oppose this bill is on the basis of local control. The Kansas Constitution states that “Powers and authority granted cities pursuant to this section shall be liberally construed for the purpose of giving to cities the largest measure of self-government.” Communities should be allowed to decide what’s right for themselves rather than by State mandate from those that don’t live there. It’s very easy and very common for the legislature to preempt home rule, but the convenience of the plastics and restaurant industries is not a compelling enough reason to overrule this core constitutional principle.

And third: It is nearly impossible in the Kansas legislature to develop policy, or even to have a conversation about, environmental policy. There are no committees dedicated to addressing these issues; the only germane committees, so to speak, are commodity committees like agriculture or utilities – or in this case, commerce. So when Kansas citizens, in their local communities, do the difficult work of organizing and convincing their municipalities to address the a pressing need like limiting single use plastic, industry groups come to the legislature to preempt it. It’s anti-democratic as well as anti-environmental.

We need policy on this issue, but not this one. Please vote down SB47. Thank you.