



March 18, 2020

The Honorable Alex Azar
US Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Azar:

Our country is at a critical point in our fight against the novel coronavirus and I am proud to say that the plastics industry is working overtime to produce products and supplies to help in that effort. We stand united with you and all of our nation's leaders to do what we can to help us get through this period of time and come out as a stronger nation together.

In recent years, there has been a push to eliminate single-use products at the local, state, and now even the federal level. During that time, the plastics industry has been working to educate the general public and elected officials that single-use plastic products are the most sanitary choice when it comes to many applications, especially the consumption and transport of food, whether purchased at a restaurant or at a grocery store. Now more than ever, we are seeing the impacts of those local and state laws restricting the use of single-use products. For instance, local and state plastic bag bans are tying the hands of shoppers and retailers alike. [Study](#) after [study](#) after [study](#) have shown that reusable bags can carry viruses and bacteria, spread them throughout a grocery store, and live on surfaces for [up to three days](#). Additionally, we are attaching a recent affidavit by a leading expert in community hygiene, Ryan Sinclair, PhD, MPH, speaking to the concerns with the cleanliness of reusable grocery bags.

The COVID-19 pandemic is forcing many Americans, businesses and government officials to realize that single-use plastics are often the safest choice. Some are starting to take corrective action. For example, Bexley, Ohio, has lifted its plastic bag ban due to the novel coronavirus. The mayor of Waterville, Maine, is calling on the city council to suspend the city's plastic bag ban and, instead, ban reusable bags until the threat of the coronavirus has passed. The New York state senate minority leader is calling on the Department of Environmental Conservation to suspend the statewide plastic bag ban. Chains such as Starbucks and Dunkin Donuts are suspending the use of reusable cups and "for-here" ware (such as plates and mugs) to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. Countless restaurants and cafes around the country are switching to a "to-go" and/or delivery model, which will require single-use plastic bags, containers, and cups to transport food and drink to people's homes. But in many places across the United States, citizens and businesses do not have the choice of using a product that is best for themselves or their customers.



We are asking that the Department of Health and Human Services investigate this issue and make a public statement on the health and safety benefits seen in single-use plastics. We ask that the department speak out against bans on these products as a public safety risk and help stop the rush to ban these products by environmentalists and elected officials that puts consumers and workers at risk.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Radoszewski".

Tony Radoszewski, CAE
President and CEO
Plastics Industry Association (PLASTICS)

Enclosures