

FCWC Statement on Waste Reduction

Submitted to:

BOL Committee on Environment, Energy & Climate on Waste Reduction

June 21, 2022

To Chairwoman Pierce & Members of the Westchester County Board of Legislators
Committee on Environment, Energy & Climate:

On behalf of the Board of the Federated Conservationists of Westchester County, I thank you for the opportunity to participate in this critical and complex issue of waste reduction.

FCWC salutes the County for the support and subsidy of food and yard waste composting and provision of many categories of recycling beyond co-mingled and paper---notably: refrigerants, mercury-containing items, fluorescent light bulbs, electronics, rechargeable batteries, medicines, toxic substances, kerosene and flammable substances, propane, tires, textiles----and more.

Yet County residents are largely unaware of how much the County is prepared to remove from the waste stream and do not understand what they can easily recycle through County programs. FCWC encourages the County's investment in a major education campaign about waste reduction and the recycling opportunities the County offers. We will support this educational endeavor in every way we can.

Recycling is not enough. Plastics flow into and pollute our oceans. Unnecessary packaging is thrown away. We do not recognize that what we throw "away" is not going "away"----because: *There is NO "away."* To help ensure that our oceans are not overrun with plastics and that our natural areas are not destroyed for the resources they contain, we need to start living such that EVERYTHING we use and consume is either *Re-usable, 100% Recyclable, or Fully Compostable*. And we must require that all sectors and levels of our economy and culture align with this goal. FCWC will support this policy and, in all our events, use reusable-recycled-compostable goods as we host and co-sponsor meetings.

FCWC believes in a future where environmental and economic burdens are *shared equitably* and not forced on communities that have been discouraged from making their voices heard. We are ready to assist the County in bringing forward the voices of all, especially those whose voices most need to be heard in our County.

The Westchester Win-Waste Waste-to-Energy Facility is not a perfect solution and certainly *cannot be a permanent solution to "waste."* The only honest solution to waste is that it doesn't happen.

Therefore, FCWC recommends the following:

- This Committee on Environment, Energy & Climate holds hearings about waste reduction that include the voices of those who have been bearing the "solutions" to waste management. For example, when our trash is incinerated, it challenges the lives of those who live around the incinerator - "throwing away" *for some* means *pollution for others*.
- That the BOL direct and fund the County Department of Environmental Facilities to create a comprehensive public education campaign to urge county residents to reduce waste in their

purchases and to reduce waste through recycling. The DEF should engage the existing local waste reduction activists already committed to waste reduction in their communities. FCWC is ready to support the County in this public education and to assist in bringing this existing Countywide network of waste reduction activists into action.

- that the BOL pass legislation declaring that the recycling sign---"chasing arrows"- NOT be permitted to be stamped on an item that cannot be currently and immediately fully recycled in Westchester.
- that the BOL pass legislation requiring a minimum of 50% recycled content in new products and packaging to be sold in the County.
- that the BOL pass legislation requiring that all food scraps and organic waste be rescued or composted by municipalities at a municipal, county, or commercial facility rather than incinerated.

As long as people are presented with products for purchase that are toxic when disposed of, future generations will pay the price. Extended Producer Responsibility---EPR—addresses this problem and is most effective on a regional, national, or even global level. However, EPR is easily subverted if producers are allowed to determine how requirements are designed and implemented. FCWC urges this Committee to carefully attend to the EPR Legislation that will be considered by the New York State Legislature in the next Legislative Session and actively gather information and concerns from constituents—particularly those who will be most directly affected by legislated solutions.

FCWC and the FCWC Student Network look forward to assisting you in gathering input from all communities as you consider how to support our state in adopting the most effective possible waste reduction legislation.

Thank you for this opportunity to contribute to this critical discussion.

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