



March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017

Representative Beverly Boswell  
300 N. Salisbury Street, Room 531  
Raleigh, NC 27603-5925

**RE: OPPOSITION TO HB 271, 'A BILL TO BE ENTITLED: AN ACT TO REPEAL THE BAN ON PLASTIC BAGS IN CERTAIN COASTAL AREAS'**

I am writing on behalf of Mission Blue in opposition to HB 271 as introduced. This bill seeks to repeal Senate Bill 1018, 'AN ACT TO REDUCE PLASTIC AND NONRECYCLED PAPER BAG USE ON NORTH CAROLINA'S OUTER BANKS'. HB 271 will contribute to litter in our coastal Dare County communities and threaten inhabitants of the marine environment offshore of North Carolina.

Apart from being a designated National Wildlife Refuge and National Seashore, Dare County lies along a newly established Hope Spot. Hope Spots are areas in the ocean recognized by international non-profit Mission Blue, founded by world-renowned marine scientist and ocean advocate, Dr. Sylvia Earle, for their ecological, economic, and historic importance. The Outer Banks is home to one of the most economically important and productive fishing sites in the southeastern US. This is in part due to the convergence of large warm and cold water currents occurring along the continental slope (a short 40 miles from Hatteras island) and large windrows of free floating Sargassum weed, which are known to trap floating debris, that provide a suitable habitat for commercially important fish species (mahi mahi, tuna, flounder) and endangered species (North Atlantic right whales, leatherback sea turtles, sei whales). The Outer Banks beaches also consistently rank among the highest endangered sea turtle nesting activity in North Carolina. Plastic bags are a huge threat to this critical area.

Marine species encounter debris, including plastic bags, that are discarded by North Carolina communities. Plastic bags, once in the ocean, can take years to decades to break down. This type of plastic is a lethal stressor to marine life through entanglement and ingestion. Plastic bags are not easily recycled in Dare County and ultimately take up space in the C&D Landfill. Plastic bag litter is costly to tax payers, discourages tourism, and can have significant impacts on economically valuable fish species. If HB 271 is enacted and Senate Bill 1018 is repealed, the environmental and economic costs will be tremendous to Dare County communities.



The Outer Banks is one of the most unique habitats along the entire East Coast and its preservation is not only important for the many species that inhabit these islands, but for the North Carolina citizens that live there as well. HB 271 is not in the best interest of Dare County residents or the vital marine ecosystems of the Outer Banks.

I respectfully request that you vote 'No' on HB 271.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Debra Castellana". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Debra Castellana  
Chief Operating Officer