

**For Immediate Release**

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## **Organizations Denounce Dow Chemical and Keep America Beautiful's "Hefty Energy Bag" Program Expansion**

*Groups call the program 'greenwashing' and misleading to consumers*

January 3, 2017- Recycling industry leaders and environmental organizations have expressed their concern and dismay over Dow Chemical and Keep America Beautiful's announcement that the Hefty Energy Bag program will be brought to two new cities.

Monica Wilson, Policy and Research Coordinator at GAIA, states, "Dow Chemical is the world's largest plastic producer, and the industry is planning a [40% rise in plastic production](#) in the next decade. The Hefty Energy Bag program is distracting the public from Dow's plans to flood the marketplace with more and more plastic when plastic pollution is already a major planetary crisis."

Cobb County, GA, and Boise, ID's decision to bring Hefty Energy Bag into their cities comes at a time when local collection systems across the United States are scrambling to adhere to China's new strict contamination standards, effective as of the 1st of this year. Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs) are concerned that bringing these non-recyclable plastics into their facilities could have a devastating impact on their sorting abilities, increasing the potential for further contamination when MRFs are struggling to significantly decrease their contamination rates within a short time-frame.

"Recyclers face increasing challenges to ensure that materials collected are properly sorted, thanks to the proliferation of non-recyclable packaging that can contaminate our bales and break our machinery," says Lynn Hoffman, Co-President of Eureka Recycling, a MRF and zero waste organization. "Especially given China's ban, all efforts must be put into not creating confusion for residents about what can and cannot be put in the recycling bin. By encouraging residents to collect non-recyclables along with their regular recycling for pick-up, the Hefty Energy Bag program is blurring the line, and jeopardizing community trust that what is collected will be recycled and used in a new product."

The program, which is currently instated in Omaha, NE, encourages families to collect their "previously non-recycled" plastics — single use items like chip bags, disposable cutlery, and juice pouches — in a special orange Hefty bag for curbside pick-up. These plastics are then sent to be burned in a cement kiln outside of Kansas City, MO that has [violated](#) the [Clean Air](#)

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[Act](#). The program has even been marketed as “[plastics recycling](#),” drawing criticism from the [National Recycling Coalition](#), among others.

Already the program has incited controversy in Omaha, NE, where local environmental groups have voiced skepticism over the project’s sustainability claims. Missouri Valley Group Sierra Club Vice Chair and Emeritus Professor of Public Health at the U. of Nebraska at Omaha, Dr. David Corbin, states, “The Missouri Valley Group Sierra Club considers the Hefty Energy Bag program to be greenwashing. The solution to the proliferation of plastic is not to create even more and then use it as fuel. It is akin to increasing food production so we can feel good about all the food we waste because it can produce compost.”

Since the October 2017 launch of the (Dirty) Hefty Energy Bag Campaign, 60 organizations across the country, from major environmental organizations to city agencies, recycling operators and academic institutions have signed a [pledge](#) stating that they will not support Dow Chemical and Keep America Beautiful’s “Hefty Energy Bag” program if it comes to their cities.