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'Coalition for Consumer Choices' Expands in Response to Product Bans

- Small Businesses, Retailers, Manufacturers, and Consumer Advocates Organize to Oppose Executive Order 77 -

RICHMOND, VA – The 'Coalition for Consumer Choices' (Coalition) announced its expanded goals today in response to Executive Order 77 (EO 77), which was issued by Virginia Governor Ralph Northam in March 2021. The Coalition represents thousands of small businesses, retailers, manufacturers, and consumer advocates from across the Commonwealth whose employees and customers will be harmed by EO 77. The Coalition's members will engage in a statewide effort to educate the general public, state agency procurement managers, and policymakers on EO 77's extensive negative environmental, social, and economic impacts for Virginians.

EO 77 will adversely affect the:

- Environment by increasing solid waste and greenhouse gas emissions
- Economy by increasing costs for students, taxpayers and state agencies (including colleges and universities)
- State employees and the general public by reducing the availability of healthy and safely-packaged food products

According to analysis conducted by mb Public Affairs Inc., the total additional costs associated with just the nutrition expenditures affected by EO 77, these costs will increase 75 to 118 percent or \$10.1 million to \$15.8 million.

"EO 77 is bad public policy and will harm small businesses across Virginia still struggling to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic," said Brett Vassey, President & CEO, Virginia Manufacturers Association. "The best way to protect the Commonwealth's environment is for state government to work together with stakeholders to pursue policy solutions that create and support a more circular economy here in Virginia."

Plastic packaging is also important for food safety and allows for greater consumer choice. Industry has worked with public health advocates over the last decade to improve healthy food and beverage choices for our kids (in K-12 and higher education), particularly in vending machines and institutional food service. Now, EO 77 bans bottled water and safe plastic-packaged food that will extend shelf life and often does not require refrigeration. For example, 1.5 grams of plastic packaging has been shown to extend a cucumber shelf life from 3 to 14 days. Refrigerated cheese shelf life increased from 7 days to 180 with reduced oxygen provided by plastic packaging. Safe and healthy food choices are public values

that should not be limited for students, public health workers, public safety workers, and state employees.

“A ‘one-size-fits-all’ government mandate is not the way to reduce plastic pollution nor the way to make our communities more ‘green’ – it would actually do just the opposite,” said Parker Slaybaugh, Executive Director, Virginia Food Industry Association. “Substituting plastics for heavier paper or aluminum replacements will result in more delivery trucks in our neighborhoods and more natural resources harvested to meet demand. All of this will drive prices up on everyday consumers, while still not achieving sustainability goals.”

List of current Coalition members:

- American Chemistry Council
- Fredericksburg Chamber of Commerce
- Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce
- NFIB
- NOVA Chamber of Commerce
- Prince William Chamber of Commerce
- Roanoke Chamber of Commerce
- Virginia Chemistry Council
- Virginia Food Industry Association
- Virginia Retail Federation
- Virginia Manufacturers Association
- Virginia Wholesalers and Distributors Association
- VRLTA

For more information about the Coalition and to stay current with its efforts, please visit <https://consumerchoices.org/virginia-action-alert/>.

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