



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** Res 0535-2023, **Version:** \*

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### Res. No. 535

Resolution calling upon the New York State Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign S. 4746/A. 4333 the "Fashion Sustainability and Social Accountability Act".

By Council Members Velázquez and Louis

Whereas, According to the United Nations Environment Programme, the fashion industry is responsible for approximately 2 to 8% of global carbon emissions, more than emitted by international airplane travel and the shipping industry combined, with industry emissions expected to increase more than 50% by 2030; and

Whereas, The fashion industry is responsible for approximately 20% of the estimated 300 million tons of plastic produced annually across the globe, with modern clothing increasingly relying on synthetic fabrics derived from fossil fuels, rather than those made from biodegradable natural fibers; and

Whereas, It is estimated that producing a single pair of denim jeans may require thousands of liters of water (up to 10,000 liters approximately), while producing a single cotton shirt may require up to 2,500 liters of water; and

Whereas, According to a study published in the journal Scientific Reports in 2019, the laundering of clothing made from synthetic fibers has been implicated as a major source of microplastic pollution, with some studies estimating that 35% of the global release of primary microplastics into world oceans can be attributed to washing fabrics containing synthetic fibers; and

Whereas, According to a study published in the journal Environmental Health in 2018, fashion industry supply chains routinely site their manufacturing facilities in places with insufficient environmental and worker protections, regulations, and oversight, enabling egregious pollution practices and significant human rights violations to occur throughout the industry; and

Whereas, Many internationally recognized clothing brands have been found to source goods from supply chains that utilize sweatshops, child labor, forced labor, and outright slavery; and

Whereas, According to a study from the Helena Kennedy Centre for International Justice published in 2021, over 100 well known international brands source textiles from intermediary companies that obtain cotton from supply chains known to include slave labor; and

Whereas, According to the World Economic Forum, global trends point toward consumers using individual items of clothing for shorter periods of time than they have historically, it is estimated that the number of garments produced every year has doubled since 2000; and

Whereas, Estimates from the circular economy advocacy group The Ellen Macarthur Foundation suggest that, across the globe, a truckload worth of textiles is dumped or burned every second, with approximately 87% of the total fiber utilized by the fashion industry ultimately being incinerated or sent to landfill; and

Whereas, According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Americans discarded approximately 11.3 million tons of textile waste in 2018, with the average consumer in the United States utilizing clothing for a quarter of the length of time of their global peers, according to the United Nations Environment Programme; and

Whereas, In November of 2021, photos showing vast mounds of discarded clothing littering the Atacama Desert in Chile made international headlines, where it is estimated that up to 59,000 tons of clothes that aren't sold in the U.S. or Europe end up at the Iquique Port in the Alto Hospicio free zone in northern Chile each year; and

Whereas, While discussions of sustainability often focus on the fast fashion sector of the industry, luxury designer houses such as Burberry and Louis Vuitton have garnered significant negative press for the practice of burning unsold inventory to maintain the perception of scarcity; and

Whereas, While many companies in the fashion industry have launched publicity campaigns lauding

their commitment to sustainability, these promises often fail to withstand scrutiny; and

Whereas, In 2020, the retailer H&M was accused of greenwashing by the Norwegian Consumer Authority, after an investigation into marketing related to its Conscious line, which was promoted as more sustainable despite containing more synthetic fabrics than the company's standard collection, with other items marketed as using less water to manufacture than average, despite actually using more; and

Whereas, The New York State Senate bill S. 4746 and New York State Assembly bill A. 4333, introduced in the 2023-24 session, also known as the "Fashion Sustainability and Social Accountability Act" seek to address the environmental impact of the fashion industry by requiring fashion retail sellers and manufacturers doing business in New York, with annual worldwide gross receipts exceeding 100 million dollars to meet certain requirements, or risk civil penalties; and

Whereas, The Act would require covered businesses to disclose their environmental and social due diligence policies, conduct supply chain mapping of a minimum of 50% by volume of suppliers across all tiers of production, and post disclosure information relevant to due diligence policies and mitigation efforts on their websites; and

Whereas, The New York State Attorney General would be authorized to bring civil proceedings against companies who do not comply, and private citizens would be enabled to commence civil action against companies or individuals alleged to have violated the Act; and

Whereas, While New York has limited authority over international fashion industry supply chains, requiring entities that do business in the State to adhere to baseline ethical behavior regarding labor and environmental practices may potentially mitigate some of the impacts of an industry widely considered to be one of the most polluting in the world; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the New York State Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign S. 4746/A. 4333, the "Fashion Sustainability and Social Accountability Act".

NRC  
LS#11688  
1/4/23