Title: An act to amend the environmental conservation law, in relation to the prohibition of the use of plastic beverage container packaging

Purpose: This bill would reduce plastic pollution and the destruction of marine life due to plastic devices used to package beverage containers, commonly referred to as "six pack rings" by prohibiting the sale of beverages held together by such packaging.

Statement of Support: Humans have produced more than 8.3 billion tons of plastic since the early 1950s. A staggering 60% of that plastic has ended up in either a landfill or the environment.¹ The characteristics that make plastics so popular, namely their durability and resistance to degradation, also make them nearly impossible to break down naturally in our environment. Instead, plastic items become fragmented into smaller and smaller pieces over time, becoming increasingly ubiquitous in our waterways, wildlife, and our bodies.

Plastic beverage container “rings” are typically used only for a short period of time before they are disposed of, ending up in our landfills and waterways, where they are often ingested by land and marine animals. They can be harmful, and in many cases deadly, to birds and marine life, and have been shown to break down into microplastics that are found in our drinking water. An estimated 18 billion pounds of plastic makes its way into the ocean each year, 40% of which is from single-use plastics, including six pack rings.²

With only 9% of plastic in the United States being recycled, it is time to find ways to limit plastic waste and pollution bringing adverse consequences to both our health and our environment. Numerous beverage companies have begun marketing beverage containers held together by packaging that is edible and completely biodegradable. In 2018, Corona became the first international brand to announce it would use beverage container holders made from plant-based biodegradable fibers.

¹ [https://www.unenvironment.org/interactive/beat-plastic-pollution/](https://www.unenvironment.org/interactive/beat-plastic-pollution/)
and compostable materials. Smaller, lesser known beverage companies in the U.S. are also embracing innovative approaches to avoid the use of plastics. Saltwater Brewery in Delray Beach, Florida, recently released edible six-pack rings that are 100 percent biodegradable and edible, and constructed of barley and wheat ribbons created in the brewing process.

Given that alternative non-plastic packaging rings are already being used by some environmentally-conscious brands, it is possible for others to follow suit. New York should commit to eliminating single-use plastics wherever possible, while encouraging the development of additional eco-friendly technologies. By banning non-recyclable beverage rings, this bill presents another important and necessary step in reducing the impact that plastic waste has on our communities and environment.

*The Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter Strongly Urges Your Support of S.6647-A/ A.8305-A.*