



Bill: HB 209

Date: February 11, 2020

Position: Support

HB 209 - Plastics and Packaging Reduction Act Support

Dear Chairman Barve, Chairman Davis, and members of the Committees:

Trash Free Maryland enthusiastically supports HB 209, the Plastics and Packaging Reduction Act. This bill bans plastic bags at the point of sale, with some exceptions, and establishes a 10 cent price floor on paper bags. It would also establish a work group to tackle the issue of single use plastics and other single use products in the State of Maryland. Trash Free Maryland commends Delegate Lierman for introducing this much needed legislation.

The problem: Marylanders are using close to two billion plastic bags per year, and they have become prevalent in Maryland's waterways, along its roads, in its trees, and in its neighborhoods. Very few plastic bags get recycled -- less than 9% of plastics, and only 5% of plastic bags, are recycled in the United States according to the EPA. Instead, they end up in landfills, incinerators, or are discarded and blown into the environment. In addition to being unsightly, plastic bags harm aquatic wildlife and sea birds which ingest them either as whole bags or in toxic pieces as they degrade. Microplastics have been found in many places such as tap and bottled water, table salt, and beer. By 2050 it is estimated that there will be more plastic in the world's oceans than there are fish by weight.

The solution: One of the most common forms of plastic pollution in Maryland is single use plastic bags. We can stop this by using readily available alternatives such as reusable bags. The best way to do this is to ban single use plastic bags at the point of sale and implement a 10 cent price floor on paper bags. Over 500 jurisdiction across the United States have implemented plastic bag reduction laws and have seen their use drop dramatically.

Behavior change and the 10 cent price floor on paper: If we ban plastic bags but don't include a price floor on paper, customers will simply switch from plastic bags to paper bags, thereby creating a different set of environmental problems. Increased paper bag use, despite the recyclability of these bags, leads to deforestation, an increased carbon footprint, and more pollution from the paper industry.

We urge a favorable report on HB 209. Thank you.

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