



January 25, 2021

Delegate Brooke Lierman
Environment & Transportation Committee
Maryland House of Delegates, Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Support for HB314, Plastic Bag Reduction Act

Delegate Brooke and members of the committee:

On the behalf of the Ocean City Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation I am writing in support of HB314 to restrict or regulate the use of certain plastic bags by retail establishments. The Surfrider Foundation is a non-profit, grassroots organization dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of our world's ocean, waves and beaches through a network that maintains over 500,000 supporters, activists and members. Our chapter, located in Ocean City, holds multiple beach cleanups each year, and we find single-use plastic bags at every cleanup, representing a substantial portion of the trash we collect.

Plastic bags have historically been given away "free" to customers as a measure of convenience. However, unlike other forms of single-use plastic, plastic bags are no longer recyclable throughout most of MD. They clog machines; devalue recovered plastic that is recyclable and reduce the efficiency of recycling operations. Waste haulers, landfills and County Authorities are burdened with the cost of handling & disposing of these bags. These costs are inconveniently passed on to consumers in the form of trash bills and eventually taxes. In other words, the convenience of a "free" plastic bag comes at a cost.

In the past MD residents dumped their trash at the edge of the field because it was cheap and convenient. With time we learned of multiple environmental & societal drawbacks (odors; rodents; water quality issues). Dealing with these consequences was no longer convenient. In response, society made common sense rules prohibiting this practice. The inconvenience of single use plastic bags is no different. We now know enough about litter control & waste management to understand that there is indeed a cost associated with these "free" bags.

This law imparts no undue burden on consumers or merchants. Rather we are establishing a common-sense policy that forces us to account for the true cost of convenience. I implore you vote yes to pass this bill.

Malcolm Taylor, PhD, P.E.

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Malcolm Taylor

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Ocean City Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation
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