



SB223/HB314 Plastic Bag Reduction Act
Senate Finance and House Environment and Transportation Committees
Position: OPPOSE
January 28, 2021

1. The Maryland Retailers Association is unable to support a ban on plastic bags without a statewide price floor for paper bags. Not only does this incentivize consumers to bring in their own recyclable bags because they do not want to pay for paper, but it helps retailers with the ever increasing cost of paper bags. As we had warned last year, a paper bag shortage would occur with the large amount of states and jurisdictions with plastic bag bans in effect or coming online.

With New York going online in October of 2020 estimates are that if 15 percent of single-use plastic bag users switched to reusable totes, the remaining demand for paper bags would be nearly 3.4 billion units. On the other side, if 90% of users switched to reusable totes, the demand for paper bags would still be 738 million units.

Numerous states and localities have had to re allow plastic bag usage or delay bans due to bag shortages- including Baltimore City. As we discussed at length last year, the cost of paper bags varies for retailers, but at a minimum quadruples their cost from plastic to paper. That is why a floor was set in last year's bill of 10 cents to help cover the cost for as many retailers as possible. Cost has only increased with the shortage and it is important to understand that MOST retailers pay between 34 cents to over a dollar for paper shopper bags depending on volume.

2. Additionally, health concerns from both employees and consumers have been heard loud and clear with regard to reusable bags. Most store employees will not handle reusable bags in the current climate either due to store policies or their own health concerns. Grocery unions publicly asked for temporary returns to plastic during the pandemic as well. Consumers have also been vocal to stores about not even wanting someone else's reusable bag on the same surface their items touch.

It is with these concerns we urge an unfavorable report.

