



**BILL NO:** SB0223 - Plastic Bag Reduction Act

**HEARING DATE:** January 28, 2021

**COMMITTEE:** Finance

**BILL CONTACT:** Senator Malcom Augustine

**POSITION: FAVORABLE**

DoTheMostGood (DTMG) is a progressive grass-roots organization with more than 2500 members who live in a wide range of communities in Montgomery and Frederick Counties, from Bethesda near the DC line north to Frederick and from Poolesville east to Silver Spring and Olney. DTMG supports legislation and activities that keep all the members of our communities healthy and safe in a clean environment. DTMG strongly supports SB0223 because it will help remove a major source of plastic pollution from our environment.

Plastic carry out bags are a major source of litter and environmental pollution. We've all seen plastic bags blowing in the wind, caught in trees, and littering roads, parks and playgrounds. Plastic bags can take up to 1000 years to decompose in the environment. Incineration of plastic bag waste releases toxins into the air we all breathe.

Furthermore, plastic bags are made from crude oil. It is estimated that the U.S. uses approximately 1.6 billion gallons of oil each year to produce the more than 380 billion plastic bags used per year in the United States. It is essential that we act now to protect our planet for future generations by prohibiting unnecessary uses of fossil fuels. Banning plastic carryout bags is an important step in that direction.

Enactment of SB0223 will go a long way to reducing plastic bag litter and environmental pollution and will keep Maryland among the leaders in protecting our environment. Reducing plastic bag use can mitigate harmful impacts of plastic pollution on oceans, rivers, lakes, forests and the wildlife that inhabit them. It can also relieve pressure on landfills and waste management.

Eight states-- California, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Maine, New York, Oregon and Vermont-- already ban single-use plastic bags. At the municipal level, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Seattle also have plastic bag bans. Montgomery County, Maryland's most populous county, has imposed a fee for plastic bags for several years, but this is not sufficient.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, fossil fuel and plastic industry groups have spread false information that reusable bags could spread the coronavirus and encouraged more use of plastic carry out bags. However, coronavirus is spread through inhalation of aerosolized respiratory droplets, not through touching of surfaces. In addition, in a statement released in June 2020, more than 125 virologists, epidemiologists, and health experts from 18 different countries said it's clear that reusable bags are safe to use during the pandemic; they just need to be washed.

([https://www.greenpeace.org/usa/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Health-Expert-Statement\\_125-experts.pdf](https://www.greenpeace.org/usa/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Health-Expert-Statement_125-experts.pdf)) Research studies showed that infectious COVID-19 virus actually lasts longer on

plastic than on paper or fabric surfaces. Single-use plastic is therefore not inherently safer than reusables and causes additional public health concerns once it is discarded.

SB0223 will provide the kind of incentive that's needed to encourage consumers to use reusable bags. SB0223 is good for the environment, good for the planet, and good for our health.

Therefore, DoTheMostGood recommends a **FAVORABLE** report on SB0223.

Respectfully submitted,

Olivia Bartlett  
Co-lead, DoTheMostGood Maryland Team  
[olviabartlett@verizon.net](mailto:olviabartlett@verizon.net)  
240-751-5599