

January 25, 2021

SUPPORT: HB0314 Plastic Bag Reduction Act 2021

Dear Members of the Committee,

The Howard County Conservancy Student Climate Change Institute strongly supports HB0314 Plastic Bag Reduction Act.

Plastic has always been a fishbone in the throat of this world. Humans are ever dependent on it, yet every second we mass-produce and discard it, we are killing our planet. This leads us to consider alternatives and how we can help to save our planet, which is ultimately to ban plastic bags, no matter how thick or how reusable they are.

However, this bill does raise the question of equity, which can be immediately resolved. The arguments against this ban would reason that the bag ban would cause an unfair burden to those at an economic disadvantage. Alternatives to plastic bags, such as paper and reusable bags, can be expensive. However, this ban does not come with a fee- it leaves it to the state and county levels to determine. Hence, we can rest assured that states and counties will do what is best for their constituents in determining fees on alternatives

Plastic bags have long caused harm to the environment. Every year, around 500 billion plastic bags are used worldwide. Each bag needs 300 years to biodegrade in a landfill. They then break down into microplastics which contaminate the environment and the wildlife. Recently, it was discovered that microplastics were found in baby placentas. Isn't that shocking? Humans now ingest a little bit of plastic every single day- culminating to a point where babies are born with a side of microplastics. Additionally, bioplastics are not a viable alternative as of now. We cannot just replace one single-use plastic with another. They sound attractive on paper, but are incredibly difficult to compost and can only be handled by a separate industrial composting facility. Each bioplastic requires temperatures of at least 140 degrees F for 10 days straight to decompose. Additionally, they don't decompose in landfills at a quick enough rate and even if they do, they release methane, a chemical that is extremely toxic and detrimental to the environment.

Most people can do the right thing and just not use a single-use plastic bag. While an alternative will need to be developed for those who actually need them, the average person can totally just not use single-use plastic bags and bring their own reusable ones.

In August 2014, California became the first state to enact legislation imposing a statewide ban on single-use plastic bags at large retail stores. If a state as large as California can do it, then so can MD.

Thank you for dedicating your time on behalf of the Howard County Conservancy Student Climate Change Institute.

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