

HB 209
Annapolis Green
in Favor of the Plastics and Packaging Reduction Act
February 11, 2020

Good afternoon. My name is Elvia Thompson and I am Co-founder and President of Annapolis Green, a local nonprofit that advocates for sustainability and protection of the environment. My office is at State Circle and Maryland Avenue.

While Annapolis Green is an environmental organization, what we focus on is behavior change and that is exactly what HB 209 is about – changing people’s habits away from single-use plastic.

Here’s the problem: Merchants of all types provide plastic bags to their customers as a convenience. However, the cost of that convenience is not seen by the consumer – it’s simply factored into the price they pay for food, clothing, school supplies and everything else.

But while Plastic bags are convenient they do irreparable harm to the environment. Most are used for only a few minutes – an average of 12 minutes – and then thrown away. The problem is that there is no “away.” Driving here today you probably saw a plastic bag flying across the road like some sort of crazed bird. Or you saw one stuck in a tree or along side the road. All of these bags will make their way into our waterways, poisoning wildlife as they break up into tiny particles and are ingested.

When National Geographic kicked off its Plastic or Planet campaign it used the image of a plastic bag floating upside down in the ocean. At first glance it looks like an iceberg – how appropriate since the bulk of icebergs lie dangerously below the surface. The cheap, ubiquitous plastic bag is the tip of the iceberg of our plastic crisis worldwide.



We have a chance here in Maryland to take a small step to reduce this assault on Nature by nudging our residents into changing their behavior away from plastic.

Actually, behavior in regard to plastic bags has already changed in certain areas. Customers who shop at discount stores such as Sam's Club, BJ's, Aldi and Lidl know going into the store that no bag will be provided and they are fine with that. Perhaps subconsciously they realize that this is one step the stores take to keep their prices low. So having other retailers implement this should not be a big lift.

Under this bill people who do not bring in their own bag or box to package their purchases will be able to buy a reusable bag at checkout. A paper bag will cost 10 cents under the current bill. This makes the cost transparent; the customer will know the cost while now, with "free" plastic bags they are likely not aware that the cost of that bag is part of the cost of their purchases.

The time has come for Maryland to join California, Hawaii, Oregon, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam, and the US Virgin Islands in banning plastic bags. Many countries have banned them too including Italy, China, South Africa and Kenya.

Further, it costs money to cleanup the plastic bag litter. The best practice is to remove it at the source.

Behavior change needs leadership. I urge you to recognize the consequences of this type of plastic waste and provide the leadership needed to support this bill as presented for the sake of the environment.

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