



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

BILL: House Bill 209 – Plastics and Packaging Reduction Act

SPONSOR: Delegate Lierman

HEARING DATE: February 11, 2020

COMMITTEE: Environment and Transportation

CONTACT: Intergovernmental Affairs Office, 301-780-8411

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS House Bill 209**, which prohibits stores from providing single-use plastic bags to customers and requires a store to charge, collect, and retain at least \$0.10 for each alternative bag provided to the customer at the point of sale. In addition, the bill establishes the Single-Use Products Workgroup to study, identify, assess, and make recommendations regarding materials, process, infrastructure, and policy to directly address plastic and single-use container waste throughout Maryland.

Prince George's County supports this legislation for several reasons, with the chief among them being the County's ongoing beautification plan. In Prince George's County, efforts toward mitigating the impact of single-use items have been successful. For instance, polystyrene and plastic straws are banned. If this legislation is passed, the County will be one of a few in the United States to have a three-part trifecta on single-use plastics. Furthermore, this legislation will resolve the need for the County to add to the patchwork of legislation throughout the State regulating the use of plastic bags.

Plastic bags have wreaked havoc on the environment and waste management equipment for many years. First, plastic bags are made from a non-renewable source and can contribute to climate change. Second, very few plastic bags are recycled and, if sent to the landfill, they do not degrade or break down. Third, plastic bags get bound in recycling machinery causing additional costs in labor, new machinery, and production downtime.

House Bill 209 presents one of the most successful methods of regulating the impact that single-use plastic bags have on the environment and recycling machinery. Lessons learned from other jurisdictions suggest that single-use plastic bag bans that

are used in combination with fees on other alternatives are successful in changing bag-use behavior.¹ In the City of Seattle, Washington and the City of Portland, Oregon, single-use bag consumption decreased dramatically. Specifically, the City of San Diego instituted a \$0.10 fee on plastic bags, with allowable alternatives, and plastic bag consumption decreased by 86%.² In the City of San Jose, reusable bag use increased from 4% to 62%.³

Moreover, this legislation provides the State the opportunity to study the plastic bags regulation, during its first year of implementation through the Single-Use Products Workgroup. This Workgroup will be focused in part on evaluating and making recommendations to mitigate the potential economic impact on low-income Marylanders. Studies of other plastic bag bans with fees have estimated that costs for each household will increase by \$7.68 due to reusable bags costing more than paper bags.⁴ Nonetheless, the switch to reusable bags is predicted to save consumers money in the long run because the consumers will not have to continually pay fees on single-use paper bags.⁵ Prince George's County recognizes that this policy may have a negative economic impact on low- and fixed-income families; therefore, we support the effort to study and make recommendations that may negatively impact vulnerable communities.

For the reasons stated above, the Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS House Bill 209** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report.

¹ New York State, *New York State Plastic Bag Task Force Report: An Analysis of the Impact of Single-Use Plastic Bags: Options for New York State Plastic Bag Legislation* 12-13 (2018), https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/materials_minerals_pdf/dplasticbagreport2017.pdf.

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ Equinox Center, *Plastic Bag Bans: Analysis of Economic and Environmental Impacts* 12 (Oct. 23, 2013), <https://energycenter.org/sites/default/files/Plastic-Bag-Ban-Web-Version-10-22-13-CK.pdf>.

⁵ *Id.*