



INFORMATIONAL TESTIMONY ON HB 209

Plastics and Packaging Reduction Act

Environment and Transportation Committee

February 11, 2020

Submitted by Stacey Jefferson and Margo Quinlan, Co-Chairs

Member Agencies:

Advocates for Children and Youth
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CASH Campaign of Maryland
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Marylanders Against Poverty

Stacey Jefferson, Chair
P: 410-637-1900 ext 8578
C: 443-813-9231

E: stacey.jefferson@bhsbaltimore.org

Margo Quinlan, Co-Chair
C: 410-236-5488

E: mquinlan@familyleague.org

The Maryland Alliance for the Poor (MAP) appreciates the opportunity to submit information testimony on HB 209, which prohibits a store from providing a customer with a plastic bag and requires a store to charge, collect and retain at least 10-cents for each durable bag provided to a customer.

MAP appreciates the intent of this bill to reduce plastic pollution across the state of Maryland, and to encourage alternatives to single-use bags. The potential health effects on humans of plastic particles, their additives and the toxins they absorb from the environment are of great concern. Studies show that poorer communities tend to be exposed to higher concentrations of air pollution because of their proximity to landfills, trash incinerators, etc.

MAP is concerned that the ten cent fee on paper bags in this bill will disproportionately impact Marylanders experiencing poverty, in particular, those who utilize the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Women's, Infants and Children (WIC) program to purchase food. There are currently 797,000 SNAP and WIC participants in Maryland.¹ Federal nutrition benefits cannot be used to purchase non-food items that includes purchasing bags. Therefore, if someone purchasing groceries with their benefits does not have a reusable bag on them and does not have any cash on them they will have to carry out their items in their arms. MAP would encourage the committee to consider ways to reduce the disparate impact on Marylanders experiencing poverty.

MAP appreciates the opportunity to comment on HB 209, and looks forward to continue working with the General Assembly on issues related to poverty.

Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) is a coalition of service providers, faith communities, and advocacy organizations advancing statewide public policies and programs necessary to alleviate the burdens faced by Marylanders living in or near poverty, and to address the underlying systemic causes of poverty.

¹ Data from Maryland Department of Health and Maryland Department of Human Services, January 2020