



House Environment and Transportation Committee

February 11, 2020

HB 209: Plastics and Packaging Reduction Act

Position: Support with Amendments

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council's (Council) mission is to advance the inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in all facets of community life by eliminating barriers, creating opportunities, empowering people, and promoting innovation. People with developmental disabilities and their families want to participate fully in community activities. Dining out is no exception.

We understand the intent of the bill is to address the environmental concerns related to plastic carryout bags and other single-use packaging and products. **While we have no position related to carryout bags, we recommend the following amendments to Section 2, the Single-Use Products Workgroup:**

- Page 5, add: (vii) one representative of a statewide disability advocacy organization
- Page 6, add: (2) (vi) evaluate the impact on people with disabilities, and ensure single-use products are available when needed as an accommodation.

In order to have the opportunity to meaningfully participate in all facets of community life, including enjoying a meal at a restaurant, many people with developmental disabilities require **single-use plastic products, like straws.**

WHY is this amendment important?

- **Single-use plastic straws are important for many people with developmental disabilities.** Legislation banning or limiting single-use plastic straws in restaurants have been implemented in cities around the country. For example: Establishments in Seattle, Washington distributed paper straws and biodegradable options for their customers instead of plastic straws. **Paper straws are not acceptable for some people with disabilities.** Paper straws degrade quickly and can become choking hazards when used with warm or hot beverages. They are also easier to bite thru for people with limited jaw control.
- After implementing the law in Seattle, over a dozen Seattle chain restaurants reported that they had no plastic straws available for those in need when asked.¹
- **Adding a member to the workgroup and requiring the evaluation of impact on people with disabilities results in more collaborative solutions from the outset.**

The Council, The Arc Maryland, and People on the Go of Maryland all support meaningful community life for people with developmental disabilities and their families. Maryland must ensure that single-use plastic products are available to Marylanders who need them. Not doing so can make life even more complicated for people who rely on them.

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¹ Danovich, T. (2018). NPR Choice page. [online] Npr.org. Available at: <https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2018/07/11/627773979/why-people-with-disabilities-want-bans-on-plastic-straws-to-be-more-flexible>.