



**February 11, 2020**

Delegate Kumar P. Barve, Chair  
Environment and Transportation Committee

Delegate Dereck E. Davis, Chair  
Economic Matters Committee

Senator Delores G. Kelley, Chair,  
Finance Committee

**RE: Maryland State bills HB 209 and SB 313, the Plastics and Packaging Reduction Act.**

Dear Delegates Barve and Davis, and Senator Kelley,

Surfrider Foundation's Ocean City Chapter would like to express our support for Maryland State bills HB 209 and SB 313, which would ban single use plastic bags and place a ten cent fee on paper bags in the State of Maryland.

The Surfrider Foundation is a grassroots environmental organization dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of the world's ocean, waves, and beaches for all people. We submit these comments on behalf of our 80 chapters, 90 youth clubs, and more than 500,000 supporters, activists, and members in the United States, including our local chapter most affected by this proposed legislation: our Ocean City Chapter.

As Marylanders, the health of our waterways, beaches, and fisheries is critical to our local economy and our way of life. The Ocean City Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation tracks the trash we pick up during our beach cleanups, and plastic bags are one of the top items collected. Plastic bags pose a significant threat to our waterways, wildlife, and seafood.

Plastic bags also cost the taxpayer, by increasing clean up costs from littered bags, and increasing costs to recycling facilities, where they clog recycling machines and force workers to stop and remove them. And recycling thin plastic bags is not the answer, as only about 1-5% are recycled nationally, even after decades of promoting this method.<sup>1</sup>

Maryland House Bill 209 and Senate Bill 313, jointly the Plastics and Packaging Reduction Act, ban thin plastic bags at the checkout counter, while placing a fee of 10 cents on paper bags and newly purchased reusable checkout bags. This is a proven method to effectively reduce plastic bag pollution.

A year after passing similar legislation to HB 209 and SB 313, the city of San Jose, CA saw bag litter in storm drains reduced by 89%, and customers either not using a bag or bringing their own increased by around 80%. The major recycling collection company in San Jose cut the time spent untangling plastic bags from their machines by 50%. After the implementation of a 7-cent fee in Chicago, IL, the number of plastic bags used at grocery stores reduced by 42%.<sup>2</sup>

Given the option to pay a small fee for these polluting, unnecessary bags, or choose a more cost effective, reusable bag, the public has overwhelmingly chosen to bring their own bag.

Many other states and cities have passed similar legislation to the Plastics and Packaging Reduction Act, including Washington DC, California, and Chicago. Right here in Maryland, cities Baltimore, Chestertown, and Westminster, as well as Montgomery County, have already passed such legislation, so it makes sense to take the idea statewide in order to have one standard.

Help us pass common sense legislation HB 209 and SB 313, so we can keep our beautiful natural areas clean of plastic bag litter, reduce taxpayer dollars spent on clean ups, and keep plastic bags from poisoning wildlife and seafood in the State of Maryland.

Thank you for considering our comments,

Malcolm Taylor, Vice Chair,  
Ocean City Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation  
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<sup>1</sup> Plastic BagLaws.org. *Available at:* [plasticbaglaws.org](http://plasticbaglaws.org)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.