

**Testimony of Adam Ortiz on Senate Bill 313 (HB 209):**

**Plastics and Packaging Reduction Act**

**Finance Committee  
Maryland Senate**

Good afternoon Chair Kelley, Vice-Chair Feldman and members of the Committee. My name is Adam Ortiz, Director of the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection.

The Montgomery County Executive fully supports the ban on plastic bags proposed by Senate Bill 313. However, the County would like to preserve its very successful carryout bag tax program for durable carryout bags allowed under the bill. If preserving existing local programs is not feasible, I believe a portion of the \$.10 fee on durable carryout bags should be remitted to the county governments tasked with enforcing the ban.

In 2012, Montgomery County enacted a \$0.05 excise tax on both paper and plastic disposable carryout bags. Under County ordinance, the retailer retains \$0.01 and the County receives \$0.04. The mission of the County's bag tax program is to provide patrons with a choice in how they decide to protect local water resources from the negative impacts of bag litter. Patrons may choose to (1) bring reusable bags, (2) refuse to purchase carry-out bags, or (3) pay the tax

The revenue from the bag tax goes directly into the Department of Environmental Protection's Water Quality Protection Fund – a dedicated fund for water quality improvement activities. The total revenue generated from the bag tax since its inception is approximately \$20 million. This has had a tremendous impact on the County's initiatives to improve the water quality of streams and reduce the impacts of stormwater. Since 2012, the County's bag tax has funded the following programs and accomplishments:

- Launched the White Oak Anti-litter and Gift Outside the Box Holiday campaigns.
- Placed nearly 600 ads on buses, bus shelters, recycling trucks.
- Gave \$2.1 million back to the community through 49 restoration and outreach grants including the County's first Band-a-long trash trap.
- Distributed over 200,000 reusable bags to residents.
- Funded 36 stream cleanups removing over 18,000 lbs. of litter.
- Hosted or participated in 1200 events, trainings or workshops educating over 145,000 citizens.
- Installed 140 pet waste stations in 43 communities reaching over 16,000 households. Collected 19 tons (38,000 lbs.) of pet waste since 2014.
- Installed over 800 RainScapes projects equaling \$1.57 million back to the community.
- Installed over 250 storm drain markers and 20 art projects.

For all these reasons, the Montgomery County Executive supports the ban on plastic bags proposed by Senate Bill 313. I strongly urge you to consider preserving existing programs or remitting a portion of the fee to the counties to allow us to continue our initiatives to protect local water resources.