



MARYLAND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COALITION

Dedicated to the rights and quality of life for people with developmental disabilities in Maryland

House Economic Matters Committee

HB 69: Environment – Single-Use Plastics – Restrictions

February 17, 2021

Position: Support



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The Maryland Developmental Disabilities (DD) Coalition is comprised of five statewide organizations that are committed to improving the opportunities and outcomes for Marylanders with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). People with developmental disabilities and their families want to participate fully in community activities. Dining out is no exception. As such, **we support HB 69, and appreciate the sponsor's collaboration and recognition of the needs of people with disabilities by specifically including a requirement that requires food service businesses keep single-use food and beverage products in stock to accommodate people's physical and medical needs in compliance with federal, state, and local laws and regulations.** (page 4, lines 12-16)

WHY is this important?

- 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 **plastic** straws.
- **Restaurants may not keep plastic straws in stock unless required to do so.** Legislation banning or limiting single-use plastic straws in restaurants has been implemented in cities around the country. When legislation only specified that plastic straws be available "upon request," many restaurants did not keep any in stock. For example: Establishments in Seattle, Washington distributed paper straws and biodegradable options for their customers instead of plastic straws; and, over a dozen Seattle chain restaurants reported that they had no plastic straws available for those in need when asked. (Danovich, T. (2018). Npr.org.)
- **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.

In order to ensure this did not happen in Washington DC, the zero-waste campaign mandated that establishments keep plastic straws on hand and require fact sheets be distributed to all restaurants that explicitly states; **"Regulated entities must keep a limited stock of plastic straws available to meet the needs and remain compliant with local and federal disability rights laws."**

The DD Coalition supports community life for people with developmental disabilities and their families. **Maryland must ensure that plastic drinking straws are available to Marylanders who need them.** Not doing so can make life even more complicated for people who rely on this tool.

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