

**TESTIMONY ON SB 223
Position: FAVORABLE
January 28, 2021
Finance Committee**

Chairwoman Delores Kelly and Members of the Committee:

We support the Plastic Bag Reduction Act (SB 223) which will ban plastic bags with a thickness of less than 4 mils. We understand that if retailers wish to provide bags greater than 4 mils thick to their customers, they may do so at their convenience or choose to charge a fee. While we would prefer plastic bags not be offered whatsoever, we feel this bill is a good step in the right direction to reduce waste from single-use plastics.

First of all, we want to thank the General Assembly for its leadership in reducing plastic pollution through a ban on foam food packaging two years ago. Last year, during the truncated session, a plastic bag ban received strong support before the pandemic interfered with efforts to advance environmental legislation. We are confident in your leadership in supporting a bag ban that is good for the planet and good for all Marylanders.

Faith leaders are increasingly concerned about the throw-away culture of our society.

- The culture that idolizes economic gain at the expense of the poor, the environment, and future generations.
- The culture that seems to have forgotten that there's something seriously wrong with extracting fossil fuels that have been in the ground for millions of years in order to produce a plastic bag that will be used once and thrown away.
- The culture that expects jurisdictions to pay to remove unsightly trash from parkways, rivers, and tree branches, simply because we feel it is inconvenient to be asked to stop using plastic bags. The economic harm caused to jurisdictions for having to clean up these shared spaces takes away from the economic good our jurisdictions could be investing in instead.

In congregations operating on the margins of society, the most commonly reported environmental problem they struggle with is oppressive trash in their neighborhoods and local streams. This plastic waste is what our marginalized neighbors see when they go out for a walk.

There are many complex pollution problems in Maryland, and this is one solution in which everyone can participate. A ban on plastic bags of 4 mil thickness is easy to understand and applies to everyone without bias.

We must live in harmony with all of Creation around us, and this legislation encourages us to change our behavior to more closely align with what we know in our heart is the right way to live. It is time Maryland ends our damaging **addiction to convenience**. IPC envisions a time when using reusable bags will be as second-nature as putting on your seat belt, and when today's throw-away culture is a thing of the past.

Our organization stands ready to help educating the public about this bill and helping congregations educate their members.

Thank you for considering our testimony in support of SB223.

Sincerely,

Jodi Rose
Executive Director