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To: "MoCo County Council" <County.Council@montgomerycountymd.gov>

Subject: Testimony Re: Bill 17-20, Carryout Bag Tax Suspension

At a time where health impacts are preeminent I find it appalling that the County Council is proposing a bill that would encourage increased distribution of harmful single-use plastic bags.

This is clearly not about the impact of the tax since everyone has easy access to reusable bags. No, this is the fossil fuel industry's stirring up non-scientifically supported fears to increase the sale of a harmful product.

The production, use, and disposal of single use plastic bags harms our air, our water, our environment, and even when we can no longer see it, decomposes into microscopic particles which are now found in our water supply that harm our endocrine system. This is why the county greatly restricted the use of plastic bags in the first place.

If plastic bag manufacturers claim that reusable bags can harbor viruses, then how much worse will it be when those 'single use' bags are left on our sidewalks, walking trails and bushes as they absolutely will. And why is it ok for people to bring their pocket books, back packs and jackets into the store, if its not ok to bring their reusable bags?

While there's no evidence that reusable bags are a significant source of viral transmission, epidemiologists have identified \*several steps\* that can and should be taken by all retail stores that \*would reduce transmission\*. These steps, roughly in priority order, are routine in many of the countries and places that have been most successful in reducing the spread of the virus.

1. All store employees, and all customers entering the store, should wear masks and gloves. I find it unbelievable that most stores' employees are still not wearing masks even though data suggests that asymptomatic young adults are the likeliest source of transmission. If customers don't have a mask they shouldn't be allowed in. Everyone can make DIY masks. As for gloves, the store should be ready to give them to customers without one as the Grosvenor Market food store has been doing for the last few weeks.

2. All stores should constantly be broadcasting a message on the importance for all customers to keep their social distance from each other.

3. Stores should monitor and restrict the # of people in the stores to ensure that they don't get crowded.

4. Wherever possible, store aisles should be made one-way to better ensure social distancing.

5. The conveyor belt at the cash register and the self check-out surfaces should be wiped with disinfectant after every customer.

6. Stores should post signs and make announcements reminding shoppers to clean their reusable bags

As this virus should make absolutely clear to all humans, we are only as healthy as our surrounding environment. The 'sicker' our environment gets the more likely we will get diseases from that weakened environment whether it be deer ticks, Nile virus, H1N1 or now the Corona Virus. This is not the time to make this worse.

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