

Council President Kate Stewart
Councilmembers
Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20815



January 7, 2025

Testimony on: Bill 24-24, Taxation - Paper Carryout Bags and Prohibition on Plastic Carryout Bags (“Bring Your Own Bag”)

Position: Support

Dear Council President Stewart and Councilmembers,

Zero Waste Montgomery County is a dedicated group of local residents who have been advocating for Zero Waste programs and closing of the incinerator in Montgomery County.

We support the Bill 24-24, Taxation - Paper Carryout Bags and Prohibition on Plastic Carryout Bags (“Bring Your Own Bag”) that would ban single-use plastic carryout bags and encourage people to bring reusable bags with them shopping. In passing this bill, Montgomery County would join numerous other Maryland jurisdictions that have passed or are considering similar legislation – Baltimore County, Easton, Salisbury, College Park, Greenbelt, Anne Arundel County, Prince George’s County, Laurel, Centreville, Frederick, Takoma Park, Chestertown and Westminster.

We support the Bill as the next step to address the plastic pollution in Montgomery County. As we use over 5 trillion plastic bags per year¹ in the world, which is over 600 bags a year per person, and only a small portion of them gets recycled, we have created a significant health risk due to the plastic pollution in our environment. Plastic bags do not break down in the environment. They break up instead into microplastics and nanoplastic particles that penetrate every corner of the environment and contaminate water, food, and soil. They've even been found in the human body. Nanoplastics may pose more serious risks to human health because they're small enough to slip into the body's cells and organs².

Infants in the womb and young children are two populations at particularly high risk of plastic-related health effects. Because of the exquisite sensitivity of early development to hazardous chemicals and children's unique patterns of exposure, plastic-associated exposures are linked to increased risks of prematurity, stillbirth, low birth weight, birth defects of the reproductive organs, neurodevelopmental impairment, impaired lung growth, and childhood cancer. (Minderoo-Monaco Commission on Plastics and Health, 2023)³.

The number of American states, cities, and counties with successful plastic bag bans is growing fast. As of January, 2024, 12 states and over 500 cities and towns had a plastic bag ordinance in effect.⁴ According to an Oceana study in 2022, 78% of Maryland voters support local policies that reduce the use of single-use plastic bags.

Studies demonstrate that plastic bag bans successfully reduce plastic bag pollution by at least one-third⁵. According to the 2024 report "Plastic Bag Bans Work" written by Environment America Research & Policy Center, Frontier Group and CALPIRG Education Fund, after New Jersey's ban went into effect in May 2022, Clean Ocean Action's fall 2022 beach sweeps along the New Jersey coast gathered 46% fewer single-use plastic bags than the April 2022 cleanups collected.

¹ <https://www.theworldcounts.com/challenges/planet-earth/waste/plastic-bags-used-per-year>

² <https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2024/03/persistence-plastics>

³ <https://www.genevaenvironmentnetwork.org/resources/updates/plastics-and-health/>

⁴ <https://www.beyondplastics.org/fact-sheets/plasticbags>

⁵ <https://publicinterestnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Plastic-Bag-Bans-Work-revd.pdf>

Once again, we strongly urge you to pass this Bill. Reducing the plastic bags in our environment is crucial to creating a safe, healthy, livable neighborhood and future for the residents in our County. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Susan Eisendrath
Elisabeth Liisi Fidler
Elad Firnberg
Daniela Ochoa Gonzalez
Lauren Greenberger
Carrie Maslen

Zero Waste Montgomery County
<https://zwmc.org/>

