The Plastics and Packaging Reduction Act  
Sponsors: Delegate Brooke Lierman and Senator Malcolm Augustine

Every day, people across Maryland throw away tons of plastic bags, plastic packaging, and other plastic “stuff.” Plastic bags are virtually un-recyclable and do not biodegrade - they eventually break down into a plastic “soup” easily ingested by wildlife.

Nothing we use for a few minutes should be allowed to pollute our communities and waterways and threaten wildlife for centuries. That’s why we support legislation to ban plastic bags and incentivize the use of reusable alternatives.

Wildlife at Risk

For a bird or fish or turtle, it’s easy to mistake a small piece of plastic for food—especially when there are millions of pieces of plastic floating in our rivers and ultimately our oceans.

Toxic Effects of Plastic

Plastics contain toxic chemicals including carcinogens, neurotoxins, and endocrine disruptors.

Toxic chemicals in plastic harm wildlife, and people ingest these chemicals as they make their way up the food chain. It’s estimated that people consume a credit card worth of plastic every week.

The Climate Crisis

99% of plastic is made from fossil fuels. Every stage in the plastic lifecycle produces greenhouse gas emissions, from extraction to transport to disposal. And the World Economic Forum predicts plastic production will double in the next 20 years.

Recycling won’t address the role of plastic production in the global warming crisis, instead we have to focus on overall reduction. Banning unnecessary single-use plastics is a great first step.

The Plastics and Packaging Reduction Act:

- Prohibits stores from distributing plastic bags to customers.
- Requires stores to charge 10 cents for paper bags provided to customers.
- Establishes a Single-Use Products Working Group to study and make recommendations regarding single-use plastic products and report its findings to the General Assembly.

Contact: Shane Robinson  shane@trashfreemaryland.org
Kate Breimann kbreimann@environmentmaryland.org
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FAQs:
- **Why do we need a fee on alternatives?**
  - Combining a ban on plastic with a fee on paper and alternatives is proven effective as the best way to shift consumer behavior towards using reusable bags. Vermont, Oregon, and California have all passed similar bans that have been effective and reduced overall use of single use bags.
- **But, I don’t want to pay for paper bags.**
  - Right now, all customers subsidize free disposable bags when they shop, regardless of if they bring their own. By requiring the fee on alternatives to plastic we encourage people to bring reusable bags and ensure only customers who use disposable bags have to pay for them.
- **Can’t plastic bags be recycled?**
  - Plastic bags are not accepted in curbside recycling because they jam machinery and can cause costly damage. While some stores allow you to bring your plastic bags for recycling, Waste Management reports that only about 1% of bags are actually returned to stores nationally.
- **Are plastic bag bans effective?**
  - Yes. Data shows that bag bans with the fee on reusable alternatives are effective in changing consumer behavior and reducing plastic use.

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