



# 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 up into tiny plastic pieces 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 plastic bag or piece of plastic for food—especially when there are trillions of pieces of plastic floating in our rivers and ultimately our oceans. Plastic pollution has been found in 100% of sea turtle species.



## Toxic Effects of Plastic

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

Toxic chemicals in plastic harm wildlife, and people are exposed to these chemicals through food sources and even the air. It’s estimated that people consume the equivalent of a credit card worth of plastic every week.

## The Climate Crisis

99% of plastic is made from fossil fuels. Every stage in the plastic life cycle 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.

All people and wildlife benefit from public policies that limit unnecessary single-use plastics. Recycling alone won’t address the role of plastic production in the climate crisis; instead we have to focus on overall reduction.



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## What the Plastics and Packaging Reduction Act does:

- Prohibits stores from distributing plastic bags to customers at the point of sale.
- Requires stores to charge at least 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 Governor and the General Assembly.

### FAQs:

- **Why do we need a fee on paper and reusable alternatives?**
  - Combining a ban on plastic bags with a fee on paper and reusable alternatives has been proven effective as the best way to shift consumer behavior towards using reusable bags or no bags at all. Vermont, New York and California have all passed similar statewide bans. These types of bans 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 bags we encourage people to bring reusable bags and ensure that only those customers who use single-use bags 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, Inc 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 paper and reusable alternatives are effective in changing consumer behavior and reducing plastic bag use.
- **How will the fee affect low-income residents?**
  - Protecting the environment should not be a financial burden for those least able to afford it. The Single-Use Products Working Group will be tasked with considering the economic impacts to low-income Marylanders of these types of bans and make recommendations to ensure such policies protect the environment while ensuring equity.



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