

# Ban plastic bags, incentivize reuse!

The Plastic and Packaging  
Reduction Act  
2020



# The Problem

- **The world is facing a plastic pollution crisis:** *Oceans take in 5-13 million tons of plastic from land-based sources annually. By 2050, there will be more plastic than fish by weight in the ocean*
- **Plastic shopping bags are a major contributor:** *Worldwide, an estimated 1 trillion plastic shopping bags are used annually. They're among the top 5 plastic products collected in beach cleanups in the US. At major grocery chains in MD, 75%-88% of shoppers use single-use bags, >98% of which are plastic.*
- **Plastic bags pollute our waterways, threaten wildlife and human health.**
  - *Littered bags end up in waterways, break into microplastics, absorb toxins*
  - *Ingested by marine life, injuring & killing fish, seabirds, marine mammals*
  - *Potential health effects on humans*



# The Problem (continued)

- **Few plastic carryout bags are recycled.**  
*According to the EPA, fewer than 5% of plastic bags are recycled. They are not accepted in curbside recycling programs because they foul the machinery and are too contaminated to be marketed.*
- **Plastic carryout bags are manufactured from fracked gas, contributing to climate impacts.**  
*Greenhouse gases are emitted at every stage of the plastic lifecycle, from production to disposal.*



# The Solution: Plastic and Packaging Reduction Act

## **PART I: Plastic Bag Ban/Charge for Other Bags**

- *Prohibits retailers from providing plastic carryout bags\* at the point of sale*
- *Requires retailers to charge at least 10 cents for paper or other carryout bags, track bag charges on receipts.*
- *Enforced by the counties, effective July 1, 2021*

## **PART II: Work Group**

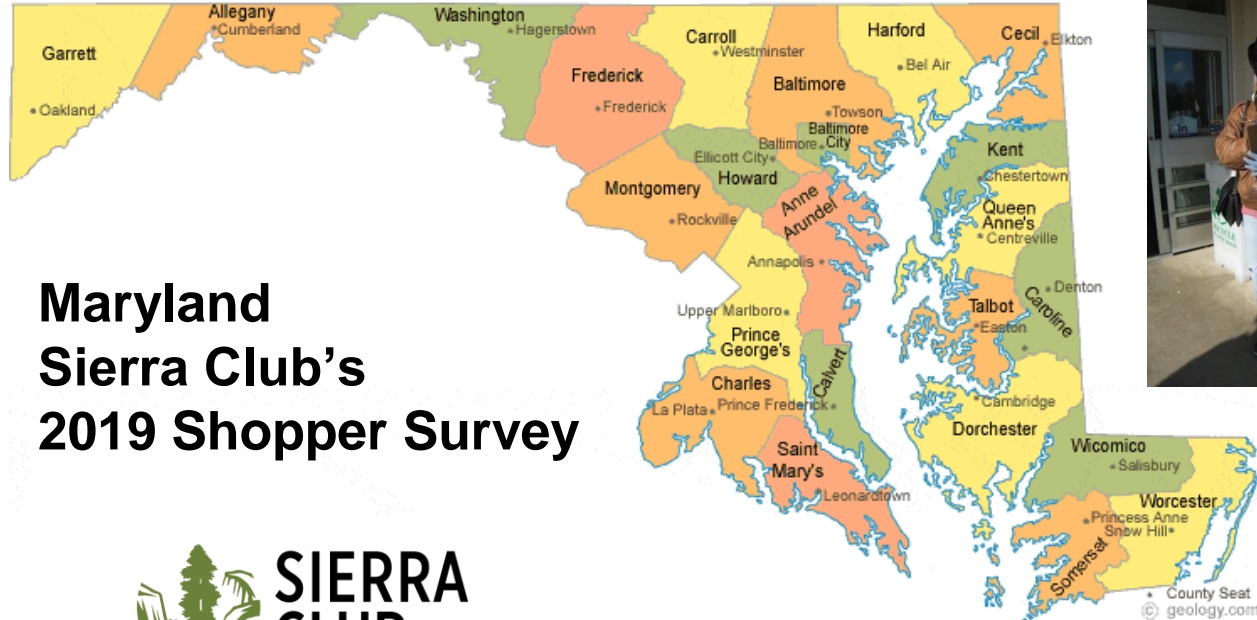
- *Establishes a **Single-Use Products Work Group** to recommend further actions to reduce plastic and single-use container waste in Maryland by December 1, 2020*

\*Defined as plastic carryout bags less than 4 mils thick.

# Plastic bag laws work!

- Eight states and nearly 500 localities in the US, and more than 70 countries have enacted laws to curb the impact of plastic bag pollution
- Bag legislation similar to the PPRA is effective:
  - **San Jose, CA:** **Reusable bag use:** Rose from 3% to 46% of shoppers  
**No bag used:** Rose from 13% to 43% of shoppers  
**Plastic bags in waterways:** Declined 76%  
**Plastic bags in storm drain inlets:** Declined 69%
  - **Survey of 1,500 CA stores, before and after the state-wide bill:**  
**Before:** 435 million single-use plastic bags, 116 million paper bags provided  
**After:** 66 million plastic reusable bags, 45 million paper bags sold
- Plastic bag bans w/no charge for other carryout bags are not recommended

# Bag policy changes behavior! Evidence from Maryland shoppers

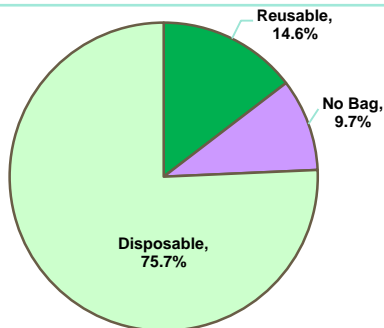


## Maryland Sierra Club's 2019 Shopper Survey

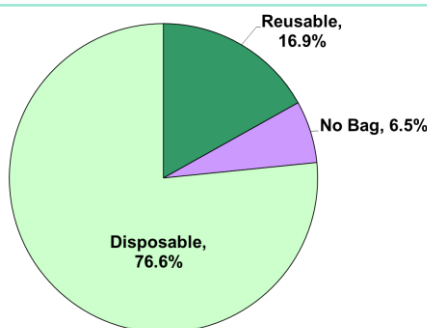


# When bags are provided “free”, $\frac{3}{4}$ or more of shoppers choose them

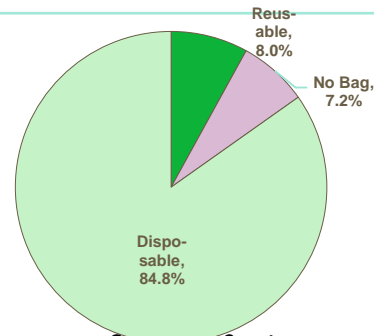
## ≥ 98% of single-use bags are plastic



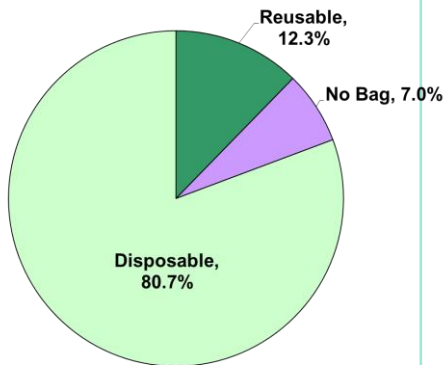
City of Baltimore, 2019  
(15 stores; 2,487 shoppers)



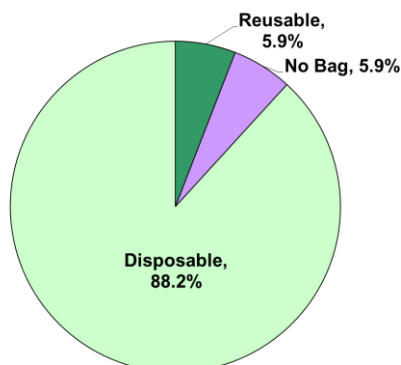
Howard County, 2019  
(19 stores; 3,185 shoppers)



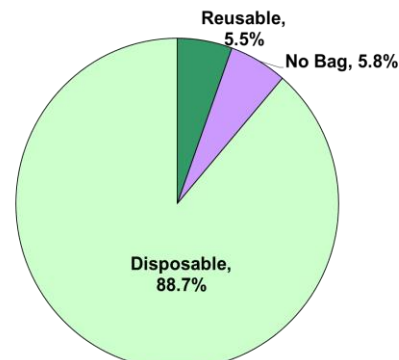
Queen Anne's County  
(4 stores; 1,271 shoppers)



Frederick County, 2019  
(20 stores; 2,588 shoppers)

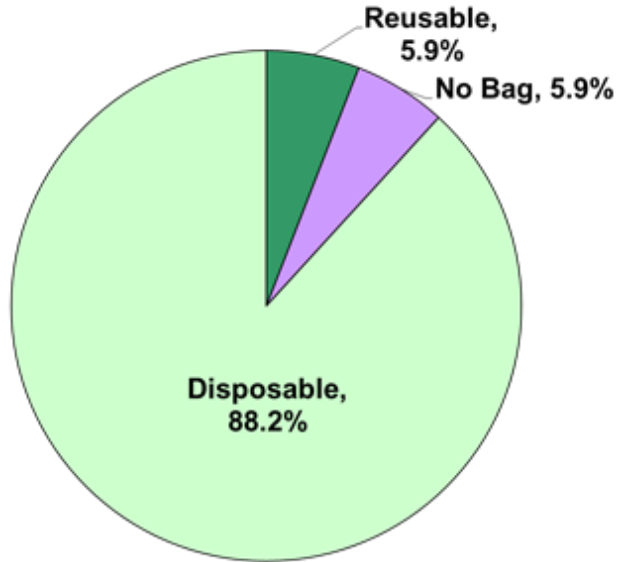


Prince George's County, 2019  
(48 stores; 7,694 shoppers)



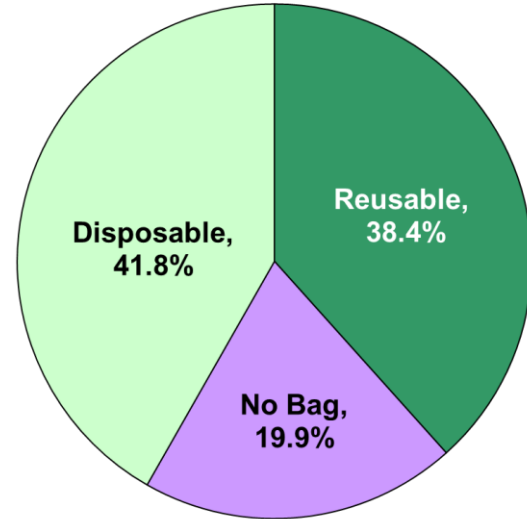
Washington County, 2019  
(10 stores; 2,337 shoppers)

# Montgomery County's 5-cent bag fee incentivizes shoppers to use reusable bags or no bag



**Prince George's County, 2019**  
(48 stores, 7,694 shoppers)

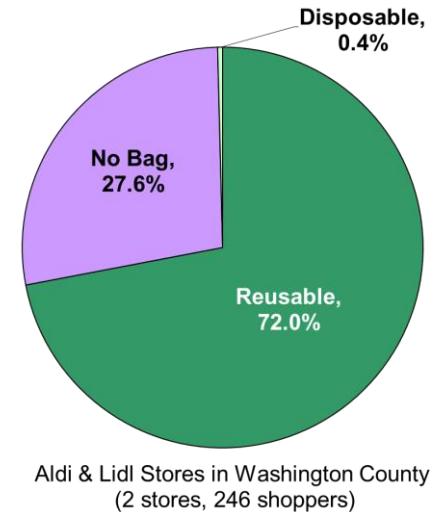
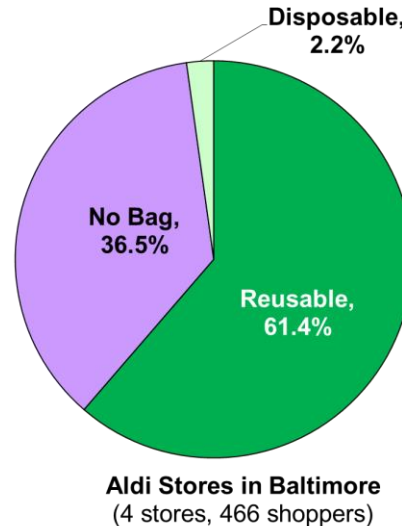
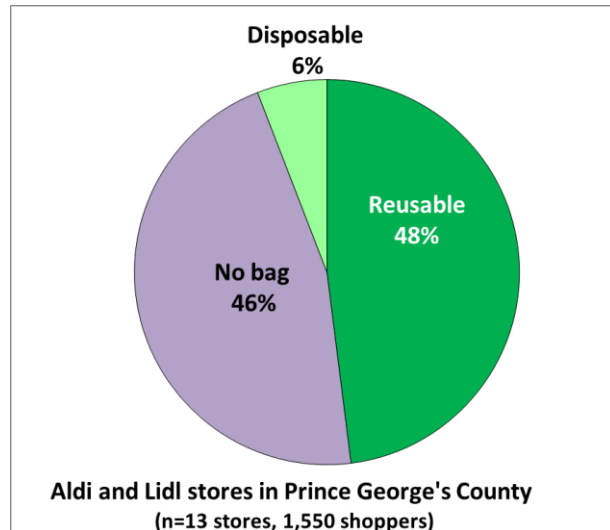
**No Fee**



**Montgomery County, 2019**  
(56 stores, 9,484 shoppers)

**5-Cent Fee**

# When single-use plastic bags aren't available and other bags cost, almost everyone brings a bag or takes no bag at all



*From the Aldi website: "...one of the ways we help our customers save money is by encouraging them to bring their own shopping bags.... The end result is that we do not only save our customers money – by not adding the cost of the bag to our prices – but also precious resources."*

# QUESTIONS?

**Please submit your questions  
by chat at the bottom of your screen.**

# Frequently asked questions

**Why not just recycle plastic bags?** *Only about 5% of plastic bags are recycled. They are not accepted in curbside recycling programs because they foul the equipment and are too contaminated to be marketed. Even if more were recycled, it would not prevent littered bags from entering the environment.*

# Frequently asked questions

**Why not just recycle plastic bags?** *Only about 5% of plastic bags are recycled. They are not accepted in curbside recycling programs because they foul the equipment and are too contaminated to be marketed. Even if more were recycled, it would not prevent littered bags from entering the environment.*

## **Why charge for paper and other carryout bags?**

- *It's an incentive for shoppers to switch to reusable bags or no bag. In MD grocery chains that do not offer free carryout bags, >90% of customers bring a bag or use no bag.*
- *It promotes transparency – the cost of providing bags will not be subsidized by customers who bring their own bags or do not need a bag.*
- *The manufacture of paper bags results in millions of trees being felled each year and involves toxic polluting chemicals.*

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**Why no exemption for low-income shoppers?** *They can avoid having to purchase a bag by bringing their own bag or not using a bag at all.*

# What will critics say?

- The bill will not reduce litter; plastic bags are a very small % of litter and of waste
- Plastic bags are 100% recyclable; instead of banning we should increase recycling
- Plastic bag production uses less energy and water than paper bags
- Paper bags are recyclable, made of recycled content, and biodegradable. The bill shouldn't penalize them.
- The fee on paper is a regressive tax that will create hardship among those on low or fixed incomes.
- Jobs will be lost in Maryland because of the bill.

# How can you help?

1. Respond to the **Plastic Bag Ban Action Alert** and call your elected officials <https://act.sierraclub.org/actions/Maryland>
2. Write a **Letter to the Editor!**
3. Come to the **Hearing on HB209** in the House Environment and Transportation Committee (starting at 1 pm) on Feb 11th
4. Come to the **Hearing on SB313**, in the Senate Finance Committee on Feb 20th (starting at 1 pm)
5. Come to **Lobby Night in Annapolis** on February 24<sup>th</sup>, 4-7 pm. Register at: [www.mdlobbysnight.com](http://www.mdlobbysnight.com) .
6. **Tell your friends** on social media, etc., to do all of the above!

**For more information**

[Martha.Ainsworth@mdsierra.org](mailto:Martha.Ainsworth@mdsierra.org)

[Sydney.Jacobs@mdsierra.org](mailto:Sydney.Jacobs@mdsierra.org)