



September 15, 2020

Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue, 6th Floor
Rockville, MD 20850

Bill 33-20, Solid Waste – Food Service Products Packaging Materials – Requirements

Dear Councilmembers:

Sierra Club Montgomery County Group is pleased to support Bill, 33-20, which would be a significant step forward in plastic waste reduction.

Montgomery County was in the forefront of banning the sale of expanded polystyrene (foam) food containers in 2015, and the state legislature followed suit with its ban in 2019. We strongly support the effort to extend the county’s existing ban on expanded polystyrene (EPS) food-ware enacted in 2015, to include all #6 polystyrene food-ware.

Number 6 polystyrene products are not recyclable at the County’s Materials Recycling Facility, mainly because there is no market for this material. When many residents see the #6 “chasing arrows” sign on the bottom of a container, they mistakenly believe that the products are recyclable, and toss them into their blue bins. These products contaminate the rest of the valuable recycling materials, and must be removed manually by county employees and ultimately be sent to the county’s incinerator in Dickerson. The most common examples of #6 plastics are the ubiquitous “Solo Cups,” many types of cups and bowls purchased for parties, and the tops of containers that cover aluminum bottoms that some restaurants in the county continue to mistakenly purchase.

There are ample affordable alternatives to #6 plastics that are either recyclable or compostable. This bill would ensure that no product with a #6 “chasing arrows” label could be sold in Montgomery County or used by food service businesses. **We encourage the Council to take this opportunity to amend the bill to eliminate the exemption for EPS and all #6 products that are packaged before reaching the food service businesses, such as egg cartons. In addition, we would like the ban to be extended to include materials used to package raw, uncooked, or butchered meat, fish, poultry or seafood for off-premises consumption.**

Plastic production and associated waste and litter are an ongoing threat to our climate, our public health, water quality, and wildlife. Thank you for giving us an opportunity to share our views on this important bill with you today.

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