


FROM	NAME & TITLE	Rudolph S. Chow, P.E. Director	CITY of BALTIMORE MEMO	
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	Department of Public Works 600 Abel Wolman Municipal Building		
	SUBJECT	City Council Bill 19-0401		

July 31, 2019

TO:

Judiciary Committee

INTRODUCTION

I am herein reporting on City Council Bill 19-0401 introduced by Council Members Henry, Dorsey, Bullock, Sneed, Burnett, Clarke, President Scott, Council Members Cohen, Middleton, and Reisinger.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Bill is to repeal the Plastic Bag Reduction Program; prohibit certain dealers from supplying customers with plastic bags for use as checkout bags; authorize certain exemptions; define certain terms; impose certain civil and criminal penalties; impose a surcharge on checkout bags supplied by dealers to certain customers; and provide for a special effective date.

BRIEF HISTORY

Ordinance 10-268 established a Plastic Bag Reduction Program to reduce the quantity of plastic bags offered to customers of retail food dealers by either prohibiting these dealers from providing checkout plastic bags to customers or by enrolling in the Plastic Bag Reduction Program. The Program included providing a collection bin for plastic bags and contracting for the periodic recycling of the bags, making reusable bags available to customers, and submitting records to the City on various data including the number of plastic and reusable bags in the inventory at the beginning and end of each reporting period. Ordinance 10-373 amended the Program enrollment fee timing, as well as the effective date of the Ordinance from September 1, 2010 to December 1, 2010.

City Council Bill 19-0401, if approved, would repeal the Plastic Bag Reduction Program and replace it with a Comprehensive Bag Reduction Program. This proposed program includes the following: a surcharge of 5 cents for every paper or plastic checkout bag supplied to a customer by a dealer who is in the retail sale of goods; 4 cents of the surcharge per bag is to be remitted to the Director of Finance monthly, with the dealer retaining 1 cent per bag to cover any administration costs connected with the Reduction Program; each monthly remittance is to be accompanied by a report on the number of checkout bags supplied to customers, the aggregate amount of surcharge required to be collected, and any other information required by the Director of Finance. Failure to comply or to report may result in imposing interest, civil, or criminal penalties.

FISCAL IMPACT

Plastic bags, while a small component of Baltimore's trash and litter by weight, are easily carried by wind and water, and are a very visible and irritating discarded material. These bags are part of the litter and trash that the City collects and disposes of every day through street and alley cleaning, skimmer boat collections, cleaning of vacant lots, and corner can collections.

Two waste sorts were conducted under the "Less Waste, Better Baltimore" Solid Waste Master Plan study, a winter sort and a recently completed summer sort. While the results of the summer sort have not yet been posted, the winter sort showed that approximately 17% of residential trash was mixed plastic, which includes both checkout and trashholding plastic bags. Of particular interest was the analysis of curbside recyclable loads. One of the challenges with separating and containing recyclables for curbside collection is the misunderstanding on the part of residents who contain their recyclables in plastic bags or put checkout plastic bags in with their recyclables. Checkout plastic bags can be recycled by dropping them off at grocery stores and other retail venues that offer this service. But for the curbside recycling collection program, these plastic bags are not recycled by our vendor, and get caught up in the machinery that sorts and bundle the recyclables. They are a problematic material contributing to the amount of contamination in our recycling collection that increases the City's overall cost of recycling.

Source reduction practices are an effective means to lessen the impact of debris on our communities, on our storm drain and waterway systems, and help reach mandated goals for such efforts as the City's Trash TMDL. While there is no one solution that will clean our neighborhoods and our waterways of trash, it will take multiple approaches, constant education, and individual responsibility to make significant progress.

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT POSITION

The Department of Public Works supports passage of City Council Bill 19-0401.

Should the Committee have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Ms. Marcia Collins at 410-396-1960, or via email at Marcia.Collins@baltimorecity.gov.



Rudolph S. Chow, P.E.
Director

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