



February 19, 2021

The Honorable Matt de Ferranti, Chair
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

RE: Petition Supporting a Plastic Bag Tax in Arlington

Dear Chairman de Ferranti:

EcoAction Arlington is pleased to present the attached petition signed by 1,482 people in support of a \$0.05 tax on plastic bags. These signatures were collected through an online campaign without the usual opportunities to engage the public at cleanups, the County Fair, and other venues. Plastic bags are a scourge to our environment. They litter our streets and open spaces, threaten water quality and wildlife, and contaminate our soil, landfills, and groundwater with harmful chemicals. The plastic bag tax will encourage residents to shift to more sustainable, reusable bags and fund environmental cleanups, public education on reducing waste and pollution, and distribution of reusable bags to those who cannot afford them.

Across the country, plastic bag regulations are evolving to decrease these risks. Presently, 471 local ordinances have been adopted in cities and counties across 28 states, including in Montgomery County and the District of Columbia. These measures have proven effective in both reducing the number of plastic bags used and the associated pollution. According to the Alice Ferguson Foundation, 75 percent of DC residents reported using fewer disposable bags (DC's fee applies to both plastic and paper bags) since the fee went into effect and plastic bags collected during cleanups declined by 72 percent.

DC's experience with its disposable bag fee does not support claims that the fee disproportionately hurts low-income residents. Most such claims treat such fees or taxes as regressive without taking into account the desired behavior changes and often ignore the positive impact on reduce plastic bag litter. The Alice Ferguson Foundation surveys show broad support for the disposable bag fee and a shift to reusable bags across demographic groups. The District's effort to hand out thousands of bags to anyone who needed them helped ameliorated any burden.

Arlington has the chance to be the first in Virginia in introduce a plastic bag tax, and we urge the County Board to authorize the County Manager to move forward adopting the necessary ordinance.

Sincerely

Jill Barker, Chair, EcoAction Arlington
Elenor Hodges, Executive Director, EcoAction Arlington

Enclosure: list of petition signers

cc: Ms. Katie Cristol, Arlington County Board
Mr. Christian Dorsey, Arlington County Board
Ms. Libby Garvey, Arlington County Board
Mr. Takis Karantonis, Arlington County Board