



The Better Bag Bill Works!

Findings from the 2019 & 2024
surveys of shopper behavior
in Prince George's County, MD



The Better Bag Bill

In June 2023, the County Council approved CB-32-2023, the “Better Bag Bill,” to reduce litter and plastic pollution, reduce single-use waste, and incentivize reusable carryout bags or no bag. It went into effect January 2024.

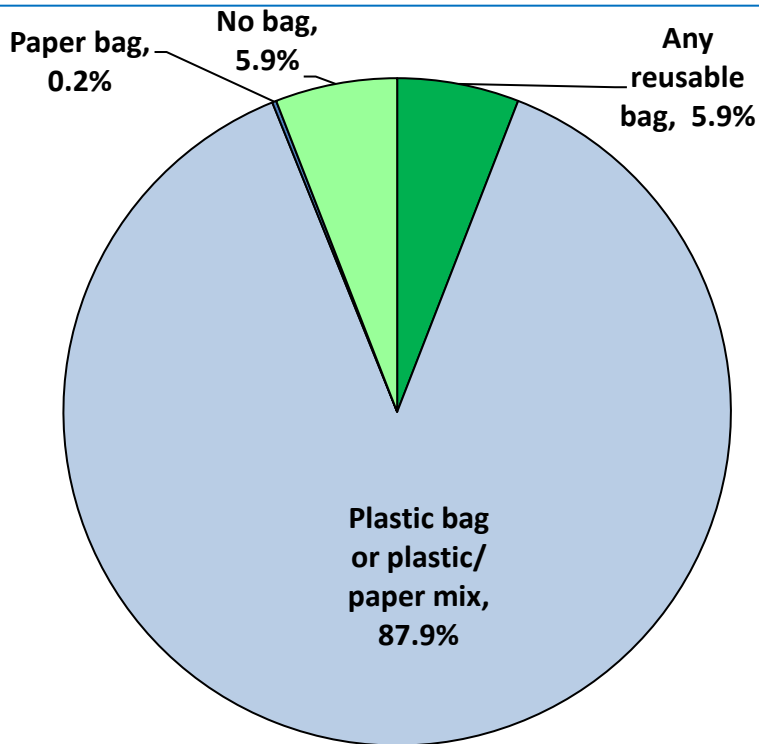
- **The Better Bag Bill:**
 - *prohibits retailers (stores and restaurants) from providing plastic carryout bags that are not reusable (including “compostable” plastic bags);*
 - *defines what will be considered “reusable” carryout bags; and*
 - *requires that retailers charge and retain at least 10 cents for paper and reusable bags, to encourage shoppers to bring their own bag or not take one.*
- **In May 2024, the Prince George’s Sierra Club conducted an *observational survey of shoppers’ carryout bag choices* as they exited 70 grocery stores.**
 - *All stores from 7 main chains (Food Lion, Giant, Harris Teeter, Safeway, Shoppers, Wegmans, Weis Markets), 3 international chains (Bestway, La Grande, Megamart), and stores that already had a similar policy in place (Aldi, Lidl) were surveyed.*
 - *More than 9,000 shoppers were observed.*
 - *These results, compared with an identical survey conducted in 2019 reveal the impact of the Better Bag Bill on shopper behavior.*

The impact of the Better Bag Bill: Massive behavior change toward no bag or reusable bags!

Distribution of shoppers according to their carryout bag use, seven major grocery chains*

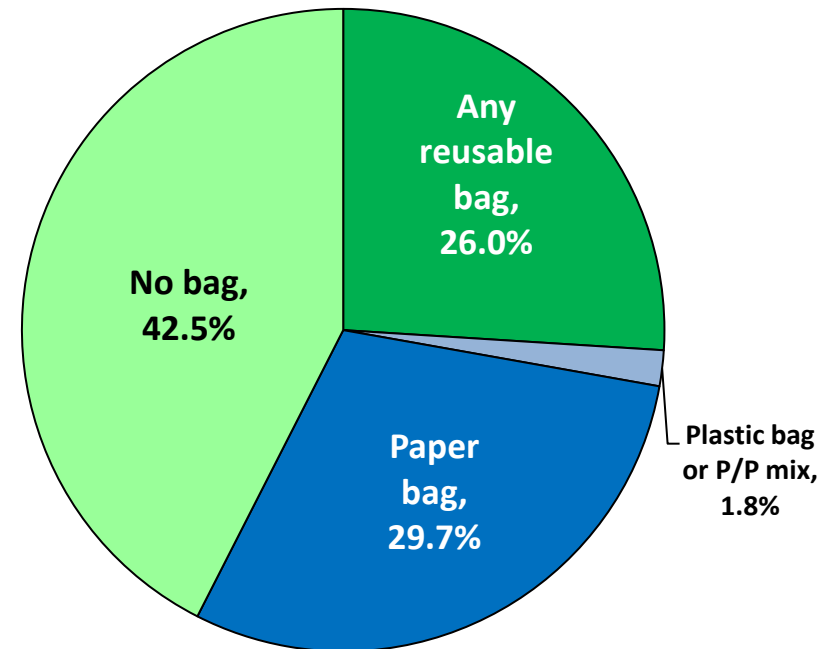
Fall 2019

(48 stores, 7,694 shoppers)



May 2024

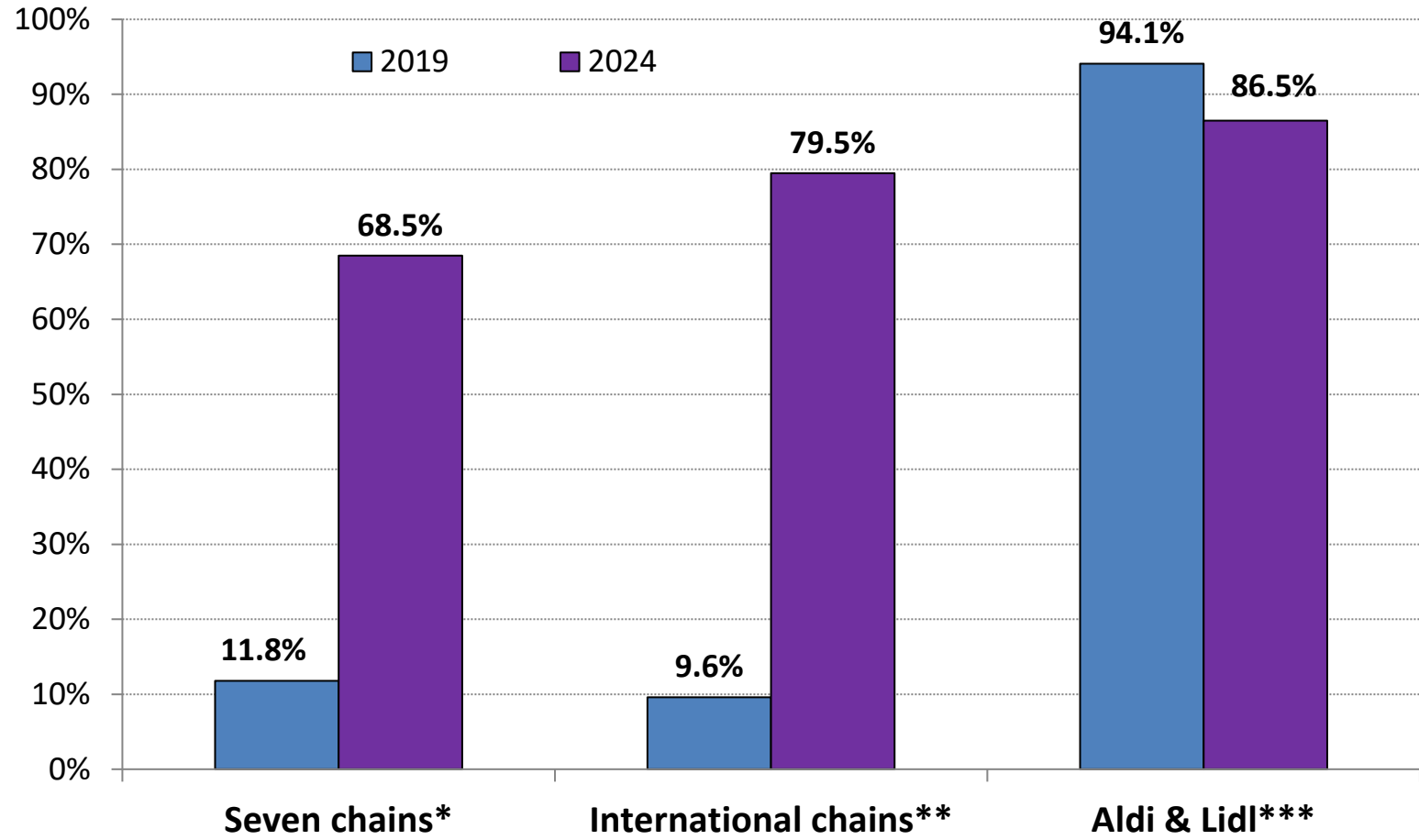
(42 stores, 6,138 shoppers)



*Food Lion, Giant, Harris Teeter, Safeway, Shoppers, Wegmans, Weis Markets

Shoppers at both the main grocery chains and international chains opted to bring their own bag or not take one

The share of shoppers taking reusable bags or no bag, before and after the Better Bag Bill, by chain (%)



*Food Lion, Giant, Harris Teeter, Safeway, Shoppers, Wegmans, Weis Markets

**Bestway, La Grande, Megamart

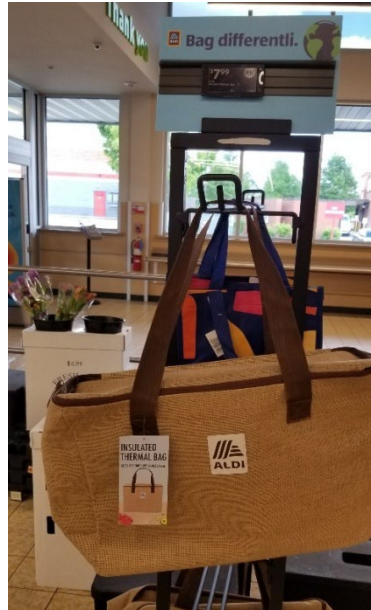
Compliance with the definition of reusable bags

Definition of reusable carryout bag:

“... a bag with **stitched handles** that is specifically designed and manufactured for multiple reuse and is made of:

- (1) Cloth or other washable fabric; or
- (2) A durable material suitable for multiple re-use that is **not made of plastic film**”

Compliant reusable carryout bags



Stitched handles



Prohibited carryout bags

Film plastic bags (all)

Cut-out handles



Fused or glued handles

Prohibited carryout bags (cont.)

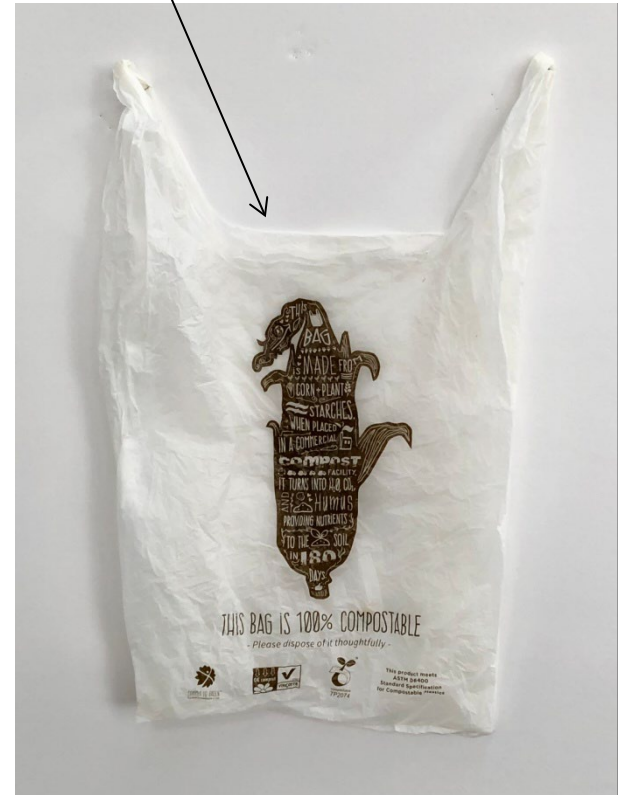
Fused, not stitched handles



Film plastic, glued handles



"Compostable" plastic

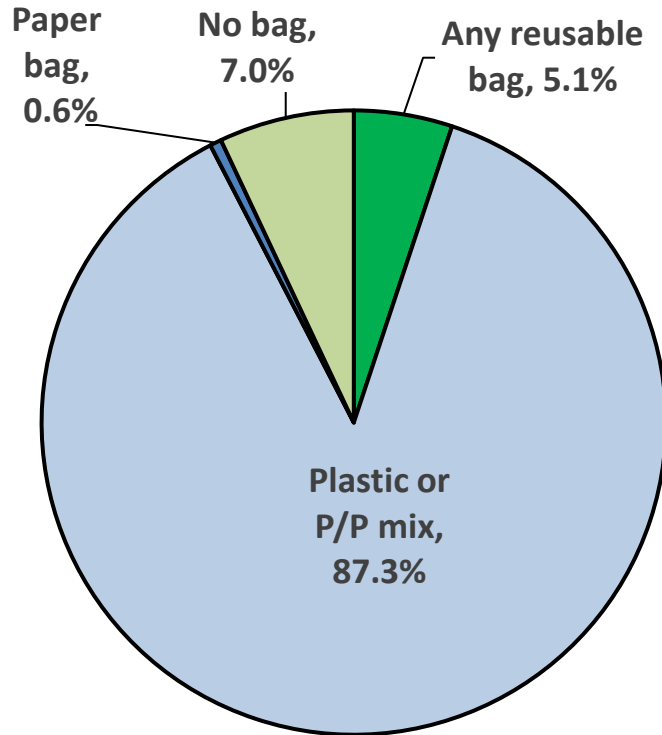


CB-53-2024

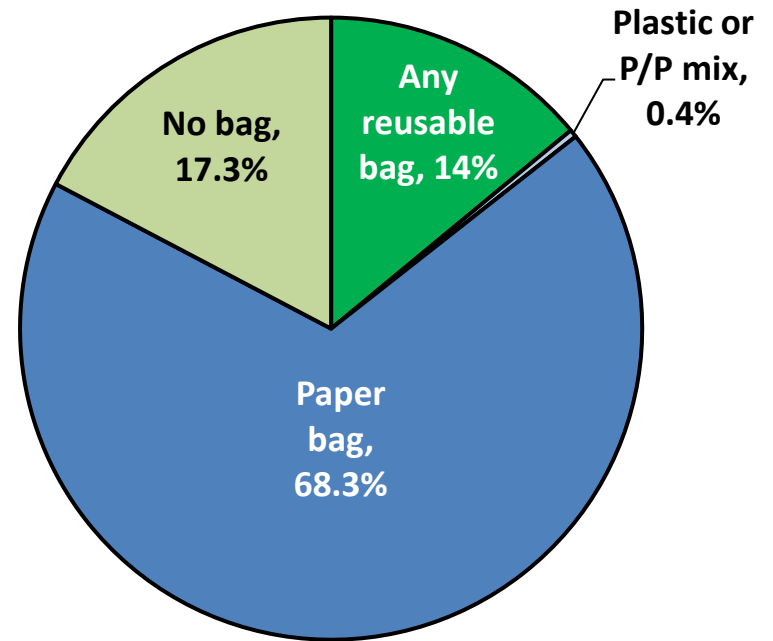
- **Removes the charge for paper bags for everyone**
 - Will reverse positive behavior change, increasing paper bags, reduction in reusable and no bag (per Laurel)
- **Exempts restaurants/food service businesses from the plastic bag ban**
 - Will result in more plastic pollution
- **Allows single-use “compostable” plastic carryout bags to be provided at checkout free of charge**
 - Will reverse the positive behavior change, increasing plastic bags (paper bags not likely to be offered if the stores won’t charge for them)
 - Will result in more plastic pollution: these plastic bags will only compost in a high-temperature industrial composting facility

Results in Laurel underscore the importance of the minimum charge for paper bags

2019 - Before the plastic bag ban
(4 stores, 487 shoppers)



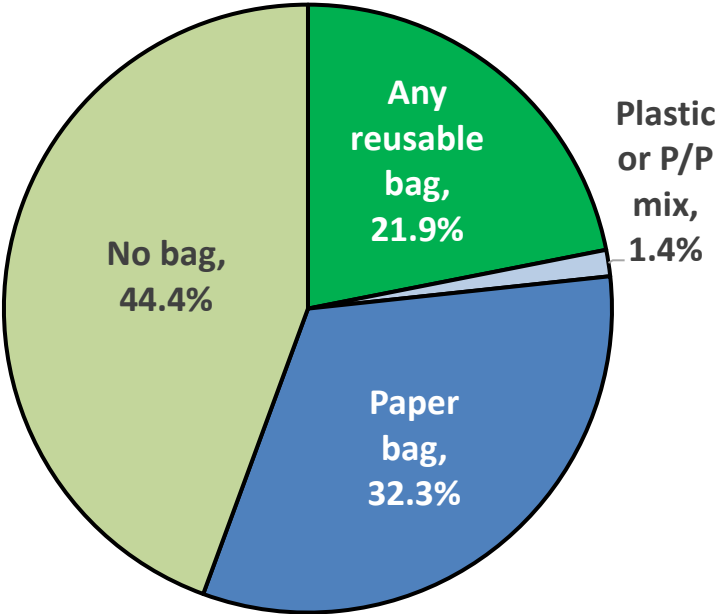
2022 – Plastic bags banned, no charge for paper
(4 stores, 457 shoppers)



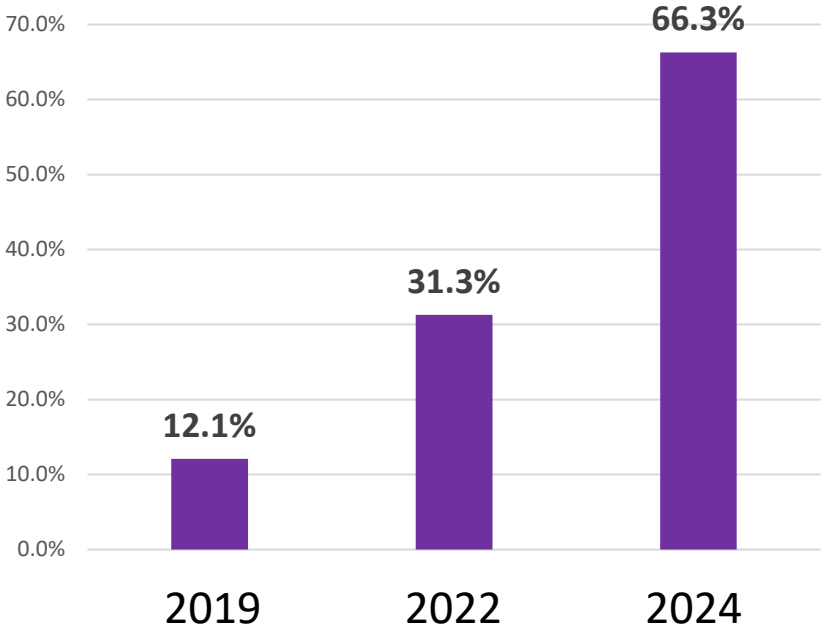
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2024: With a 10-cent charge for paper bags, half of paper bag users switch to reusables or no bag

2024 – Ten cent minimum charge for paper & reusable bags (4 stores, 588 shoppers)



Percent of shoppers taking reusable bags or no bag in Laurel, 2019-2024



Plastic carryout bag laws in Maryland, as of 8/13/2024

Policy	Jurisdiction (year of effectiveness)	Charge or tax on other bags
Tax on plastic and paper carryout bags	Montgomery County (2012)	5-cent tax
Tax on plastic carryout bags	Howard County (2020)	5-cent tax
Ban on plastic carryout bags	Chestertown (2012) Takoma Park (2016) Westminster (July 2021) Frederick (January 1, 2024)	none
“Hybrid” Bring Your Own Bag Bill: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ban on plastic carryout bags PLUS • Charge (retained by the store) or tax (retained by government) on other bags 	City of Baltimore (October 2021)	5-cent tax
	Baltimore County (Nov. 1, 2023)	Minimum 5-cent charge
	Easton (April 2, 2023) Salisbury (July 1, 2023) College Park (Sept. 1, 2023) Greenbelt (January 1, 2024) Anne Arundel County (January 1, 2024) Prince George’s County (January 1, 2024) Laurel (adding charge to ban, January 1, 2024) Centreville (January 1, 2024) Annapolis (January 2025)	Minimum 10-cent charge

*Bills in the jurisdictions in **blue type** were passed since fall 2022.