

Plastic Bag Recycling Ordinance Passes Committee

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CHICAGO -- An ordinance that would require many Chicago retailers, especially groceries and drug stores, to implement a plastic bag recycling program passed a City Council committee Wednesday.

The measure, introduced by Ald. Margaret Laurino and Edward Burke, passed the City Council Committee on Energy, Environmental Protection & Public Utilities Wednesday, according to a release from Burke. It goes before the full Council on May 14.

Under the proposal, retailers whose gross receipts include at least 25 percent of sales from food or pharmaceuticals would have to comply with the new law. The ordinance targets disposable plastic check-out bags and requires retailers provide easily accessible collection bins in plain view. Plastic bags used by the stores would also have to display the words, "Please reuse or recycle at participating store."

The ordinance does not apply to restaurants, the release said. It would also not apply to stores that do not typically sell food and pharmaceuticals, such as clothing, electronic and hardware stores. Rather, it would focus on collecting disposable plastic bags from grocery and drug stores because, according to the sponsors, they are the primary source of plastic bags in landfills.

"By providing customers with the option of returning plastic bags at these high-use locations, we would save countless number of bags from clogging our landfills and make Chicago a more environmentally-friendly city," Burke said.