



CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND

**SB 222
Support**

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

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SB 222: Environment – Reducing Packaging Materials – Producer Responsibility

City Contact: Jamal Fox

City Manager, City of Takoma Park

Jamal.Fox@takomaparkmd.gov

The City of Takoma Park supports and urges favorable consideration of this bill, which would require producers to create responsibility plans for their packaging materials, direct investment towards the state's recycling infrastructure, and allow local governments to be reimbursed for costs they assume to dispose of producers' packaging waste. This will help make producers accountable for using wasteful packaging materials, shift costs currently incurred by local governments and taxpayers to the producers responsible for them, and build the state's capacity to recycle different materials.

Local governments and counties are currently forced to take on costs of processing increasing amounts of producers' packaging waste. Many lack the infrastructure to recycle certain types of waste, adding further costs. And producers have no incentive to use packaging materials that can be easily recycled, reducing revenue for municipalities. China's National Sword policy has compounded these problems, decreasing the market value of recycled content. The overall effect is to increase environmentally-harmful, unrecyclable waste and put a huge strain on municipalities' resources, draining money from necessary services benefitting all taxpayers towards processing unrecyclable packaging materials municipalities have no control over.

The Extended Producer Responsibility policy set by SB 222 would shift the imbalance of responsibility for wasteful packaging materials from taxpayers and local governments to producers. Producers would be accountable to their responsibility plans, with measurable-goals for using postconsumer recycled content and modernizing recycling infrastructure throughout the state. The Maryland Department of Energy's needs assessment and a broadly-representative Advisory Council would make sure goals are attainable and aligned with communities' needs. These goals would encourage producers to use more recyclable, environmentally-friendly materials and drive investment in recycling infrastructure, increasing the state's ability to recycle different types of materials rather than assume the cost of processing them. Local governments and taxpayers would be reimbursed for costs they currently take-on on companies' behalf, freeing up resources for other investments.

Extended Producer Responsibility policies have years of evidence supporting their effectiveness at increasing recycling and reducing public waste-processing costs. Countries with Extended Producer Responsibility policies in Europe have recycling rates 20-30% higher than the US's rate of 50%, and Europe's packaging industry provides \$5.5 billion to help increase recycling throughout the continent. Maine and Oregon passed Extended Producer Responsibility legislation in 2021, and 11 other states are considering legislation.

Environmental stewardship is a core value of Takoma Park, yet currently the City remains powerless to make producers use more environmentally-friendly materials and must take-on the costs of environmentally-harmful decisions made by producers. As a community with many small retail businesses, we would appreciate clarification on the size and types of small retail businesses that might be affected by this bill. Overall however, this bill would help increase recycling throughout the state, incentivize producers to use more recyclable materials, and shift the costs of processing wasteful materials from the public to the producers that use them.

For these reasons, the City of Takoma Park supports SB 222, and urges a favorable vote.