TESTIMONY FOR SB0222

ENVIRONMENT - PACKAGING MATERIALS – PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY

Bill Sponsor: Senator Augustine

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Dave Arndt of Baltimore MD supports SB0222 with amendments

I support the reduction, recycling, and/or composting of as much packaging waste as possible. I feel that waste materials (particularly plastics, but also including paper and cardboard packaging) are becoming a bigger and more expensive problem for the state. I believe that consumer education is important in changing this dynamic. At the same time, we would like to change the behavior of manufacturers, distributors, and sellers to ensure that their products are packaged in recyclable or compostable materials, instead of plastics or other materials that our recycling systems can't handle.

I think this bill will not only be a giant step forward in managing waste materials, but it also sets the groundwork for changing the behaviors of the manufacturers, distributors and sellers. It makes them responsible for ensuring that their packaging is recyclable or compostable and makes them come up with a disposal plan. It has them individually (or in combination in what is described as a stewardship organization) create the plan and have it approved. Where I would like to amend this bill is in the approval process. There needs to be rigorous oversite of the plans, approval by MDE, with veto authority, penalties for not developing an approved plan and a 6-month window for delivery and approval of the plan.

 The bill also needs bigger penalties that are based on the weight of material in noncompliance. Current penalties are a joke to large business which will not drive them to compliance. Without substantial penalties, the bill becomes just a greenwashing vehicle for large companies.

I believe this can be game-changing in terms of getting manufacturers and sellers to re-think the kinds of packaging they make and sell, which in turn, will help us all become better at reducing waste.

I support this bill with my amendments.