

Committee: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Legislation: SB 222

Position: SUPPORT

Date: February 9, 2023

Dear Chairman Feldman and Members of the Committee:

The Severn River Association (SRA) requests a favorable report for SB 222, which would require producers of packaging materials to take responsibility for the materials those producers place into the stream of commerce and which subsequently enter our actual streams, rivers, and the Chesapeake Bay.

Introduction

Senate Bill 222 will implement a legal framework to incentivize packaging manufacturers and sellers to reduce the amount of materials used in packaging, and financially support the recycling and disposal of that packaging that continues to enter the stream of commerce. Currently, “[c]ontainers and packaging make up a major portion of municipal solid waste (MSW), amounting to 82.2 million tons of generation in 2018 (28.1 percent of total generation)” nationwide.¹ Much of this waste is plastic, and much of this plastic is not recyclable by any means, persists in the environment for centuries, or is incinerated and causes harmful air emissions.

The primary aims of SB222 are to reduce overall waste generated from packaging, modernize and improve waste management and recycling systems, improve recycling markets, increase recycling and composting rates, and reimburse local governments for the costs of disposing of packaging waste, thus lessening the burden on taxpayers. Severn River Association supports any and all efforts to reduce packaging waste (and especially plastic waste) as this sort of pollution negatively affects the Severn River just like all other waterbodies on our planet. Accordingly, we support SB 222 and urge a favorable report.

SB222 Provisions

Planning

The bill sets out a comprehensive strategy to improve waste management in Maryland. The strategy begins by collecting information about the needs and current processes for waste management in the State. The Department of Environment’s Office of Recycling (the “Office”) will conduct a statewide

¹ [Containers and Packaging: Product-Specific Data | US EPA](https://www.epa.gov/facts-and-figures-about-materials-waste-and-recycling/containers-and-packaging-product-specific) <https://www.epa.gov/facts-and-figures-about-materials-waste-and-recycling/containers-and-packaging-product-specific>

recycling needs assessment that identifies areas of opportunity and improvement for recycling. The Office will also require producers of packaging waste to submit annual reports describing the private sector's efforts to reduce packaging waste. These annual reports are called producer responsibility plans and will require, among other things, statements of goals for recyclable content, reuse of materials goals, reductions of packaging goals, and a variety of data points which the Office can use to further refine the waste and recycling management systems in place in the State.

Stakeholder Involvement

The bill also ensures that the producer responsibility plans and the Office's own recycling needs assessment be crafted with the input of a diverse array of stakeholders in the State's waste management processes. These stakeholders include representatives from local governments, materials collectors, recycling processors, retail and small businesses, material-generating trade groups, environmental nonprofit personnel, representatives of producer responsibility organizations, and members of the public. In addition, the bill carves out exemptions from its requirements for small businesses, restaurants, and businesses generating revenue under \$5,000,000 or 1 metric ton of packaging material in the prior year.

Conclusion

Senate Bill 222 is a common-sense measure to save on the costs of waste disposal, both economically and environmentally, and it implements a system whose time is past due, where those who create the mess of litter and waste along our rivers and streams bear their commensurate share of the cost for cleaning it up. The Severn River Association urges a favorable report.

Respectfully submitted,



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