



Date: February 9, 2023

Bill: SB 222 - Environment – Reducing Packaging Materials – Producer Responsibility

Position: Support

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee:

The National Aquarium respectfully requests your support for **Senate Bill 222 - Environment – Reducing Packaging Materials – Producer Responsibility**, which would establish a framework of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for packaging materials, a significant portion of which are made from single-use plastic.

Stopping plastic pollution is one of the National Aquarium's three strategic conservation goals. The plastic pollution crisis has been well-documented as global plastic production has outpaced any other manufactured material, with a substantial portion of plastics manufactured used for packaging¹. Plastic packaging makes up about 28% of our waste stream, and the U.S. is one of the world's top generators of new plastic production and plastic waste.²

Municipalities in Maryland, like others around the nation and the world, are unable to keep up with the sheer volume of plastic waste. More than half of all plastic ever made is accumulating in landfills or in the environment³. Globally, more than 8 million metric tons of plastic enters aquatic ecosystems each year – the equivalent of more than a dump truck full of plastic emitted to the ocean every minute. Plastic breaks down into smaller pieces and endangers wildlife, contaminates the global food web and transports toxins harmful to human health. The burden and costs of mismanaged waste that becomes plastic pollution are varied, complex, and borne primarily by municipalities and taxpayers. The U.S. spends at least \$11 billion to clean up trashed 'leaked' into the environment⁴.

In short, our current waste management practices are unsustainable and require comprehensive systemic change. It is past time for Maryland to enact additional policies that support reduced production of and demand for plastic; encourage behavior change; clean up existing pollution; and provide for education and outreach. Establishing EPR for packaging materials is one key part of a comprehensive approach. This bill would result in a better understanding of current recycling needs across the state and incentivize producers to establish and meet shared performance standards for recyclability, postconsumer recycled content, and waste reduction. In particular, we applaud that the bill contains a waste reduction goal and administrative penalties for noncompliance – although they are relatively modest in magnitude, these provisions are critical for accountability and to make effective progress toward reducing waste.

Establishing EPR for packaging materials will aid improved economic efficiency by ensuring packaging producers share responsibility for and materially contribute to the rising costs of managing waste created by the products they put on the market. With this legislation, Maryland has an opportunity to improve producer accountability for waste management and reduce the burden placed on taxpayers, while contributing to necessary systemic change towards reducing plastic pollution and its harmful impacts on our wildlife, ecosystems and human health. **We urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on SB222.**

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¹ Geyer, R. et al. 2017. Production, use, and fate of all plastics ever made. *Science Advances* (3):7. DOI: 10.1126/sciadv.1700782

² National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2021. *Reckoning with the U.S. Role in Global Ocean Plastic Waste*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/26132>.

³ Geyer, R. et al. 2017.

⁴ The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2021. *Reckoning with the U.S. Role in Global Ocean Plastic Waste*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/26132>.