



Bill: SB 222

Date: February 9, 2023

Position: Support

SB 222 - Environment - Reducing Packaging Materials - Producer Responsibility Support

Dear Chairperson Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and Members of the Education, Energy and Environment Committee:

We are writing in strong support of SB222 on behalf of Waterkeepers Chesapeake, a coalition of seventeen Waterkeepers, Riverkeepers, and Coastkeepers working to make the waters of the Chesapeake and Coastal Bays swimmable and fishable. Plastic pollution is an obvious problem in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Recently, scientists at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science and the Pennsylvania State University determined that the vast majority of microplastic pollution (upwards of 94%) that makes its way into the rivers of the Chesapeake Bay stays in and along the waters.¹

Potomac Riverkeeper Network (PRKN) volunteers have collected and diverted 13,420 pounds of trash from the Potomac River and its tributaries since 2021. Unfortunately, the problem never seems to be abated; no matter how many times volunteers clean up an area, the trash always returns.

Nationwide polling shows that 8 in 10 American voters are in favor of policies reducing single-use plastic and unnecessary packaging.² There is growing awareness and concern among Maryland residents about the prevalence of microplastics in drinking water and their impacts on human health. Maryland taxpayers and cities/counties bear the burden of paying for disposal and recycling of materials and struggle to maintain their programs. This bill begins to address some of these problems.

SB222 is a start at reducing the impact of packaging on the municipal solid waste stream. We all learn about the "Three Rs: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle." Those principles are meant to go in order of priority, but for the past five decades, this has not been the case. This bill begins to reset those priorities, emphasizing reduction.

A statewide recycling needs assessment is proposed to occur every 10 years. The bill establishes a framework in which producers set up incentive systems to reward the packaging lowest in volume and highest in recyclability, and sets a 25% reduction target for covered packaging materials within 5 years of the needs assessment. Importantly, the Bill includes public oversight and transparency for that process.

PRKN and WKC and the members we represent are in favor of reducing packaging waste that ends up backed

¹ See: <https://chesapeakebaymagazine.com/study-94-of-plastics-stay-in-the-bay/>

² See:

<https://usa.oceana.org/press-releases/8-in-10-american-voters-support-national-action-to-reduce-single-use-plastic/>

up in Maryland Material Recovery Facilities in the best case scenario, and clogs our streams and ends up deposited in the Chesapeake Bay in the worst.

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