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Environment and Transportation
Committee

House Chair

Joint Committee on Children,
Youth, and Families

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 27, 2024

To: The Honorable C.T. Wilson
Chair, Economic Matters Committee

From: Delegate Jen Terrasa
District 13, Howard County

Re: Sponsor Testimony in Support of HB 747, Products That Contain Mercury
– Fluorescent Lamps – Prohibition

Dear Chairman Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby, and Members of the Economic Matters Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present HB747, which will help Marylanders save money and reduce exposure to dangerous mercury by prohibiting the sale or distribution of general purpose fluorescent light bulbs. For many years, fluorescent lighting was preferred for certain indoor spaces, but today, LED light bulbs are the safer and more cost-effective alternative.

The Problem

Fluorescent bulbs are a personal safety concern because they contain mercury. When bulbs break, mercury vapor is released to the room. Human exposure to mercury can result in nervous system, kidney and liver damage, and impaired childhood development. Plus, mercury makes disposing of fluorescent bulbs more complicated because that should only be done during hazardous waste days or at specific collection sites. The reality is that 75% of these bulbs are not disposed of properly. This puts public works staff at risk of exposure to mercury, as well as our waterways, as mercury leeches into landfills and trickles down to rivers and streams.

Another environmental impact of fluorescent bulbs is that they accelerate the release of carbon dioxide emissions because of how much energy they use. While fluorescent bulbs used to be the most energy efficient option for homes and businesses there are now LEDs that are twice as efficient, do not contain mercury and can be put right into the same fixture. LED light bulbs use approximately half the electricity of fluorescent bulbs to produce the same amount of light, which in turn reduces the emissions

released by power plants, helping to mitigate ongoing climate change. LEDs also last two times longer and often have better lighting quality.

While individual LED bulbs may cost slightly more than fluorescent bulbs on average, LEDs cost far less to operate. In residential settings, LED bulbs cost marginally more than fluorescent bulbs, but that cost is recovered through electricity bill savings. The biggest savings come in commercial settings. Here, the most common LED bulb, the 4-foot T8, is only 11 cents more expensive than the comparable fluorescent. That LED saves \$24 on electricity bills over the course of its lifecycle.

What the Bill Does

HB 747 will stop the sale of screw-in or bayonet style compact fluorescent light bulbs by January 1, 2025, and by July 1, 2026 for the pin-base style. Below are the types of bulbs covered by this bill.

Screw in:



Bayonet:



Pinbase:



This legislation has a number of exemptions for bulbs needed for special uses like used copy machines, medical or scientific purposes. The bill just covers the bulbs used mostly in commercial and residential use. The compact fluorescents have largely been phased out from the markets already, but some people do have the tube fluorescents in basements or garages, and they are more commonly used in large multifamily building common spaces and business.

Maryland has already phased out the sale of other items containing mercury like thermostats and switches. California, Colorado, Hawaii, Maine, Oregon, Rhode Island, and Vermont have already passed similar legislation, and more states are considering this important change to get mercury out of our homes, businesses, and schools. We need to remove this source of mercury from our buildings and enjoy the benefits of LED lights that are more efficient and mercury free.

HB 747 will protect health, provide climate benefits, and save on energy and costs. I respectfully urge a favorable report.