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To: Maryland Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Re: SB0686 Covered Electronic Devices Recycling Program – Establishment

The Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA) appreciates the opportunity to support SB0686. SWANA is an organization of 10,000 public and private sector professionals committed to advancing from solid waste management to resource management through a shared emphasis on education, advocacy, and research. Our members include the individuals collecting and transferring materials, running recycling facilities, managing landfills, providing residential recycling services and outreach, and overseeing solid waste departments, among many other job functions throughout the industry. For more than 50 years, SWANA has been the leading association in the solid waste management field.

Electronic waste is one of the fastest growing waste streams in the world and is costly to properly manage. As Maryland proceeds with its Statewide Recycling Needs Assessment, it is important that difficult to recycle materials, such as electronic waste, also have strong recycling program in place, making this bill very timely. Electronic waste needs to be collected, stored, and transported separately from mixed trash and recycling for safety and environmental protection.

SB0686, if adopted, would result in many benefits. While safety may not be the most obvious benefit of the bill, it is among the most important. Lithium-ion batteries within larger consumer electronic products are posing significant fire hazards at collection sites, within collections vehicles, at transfer stations, and at recycling and metal processing facilities. Fires caused by lithium-ion batteries have been increasingly common as consumers mistakenly discard a variety of electronics in household trash or recycling.

SWANA's first strategic goal is to make the industry safer, and our strategic plan specifically includes the need to address lithium-ion batteries, as they are a growing safety risk for workers in the industry. SB0686 will help mitigate this risk by allowing consumers to have options for proper recycling.

In addition, the legislation will provide funding for electronics collection sites to implement heat spot and fire detection and suppression technology. This technology has proven highly effective in preventing fires from spreading out of control, which is highly important for the safety of residents using the sites and the employees.

SWANA worked with the Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries (ISRI) and the National Waste and Recycling Association (NWRA) in 2022 to issue [a joint letter](#) to EPA Administrator Regan on the best practices for safe recycling and labeling of lithium batteries. The letter was in response to the EPA’s [Request for Information](#) on the Development of Best Practices for Collection of Batteries to be Recycled and Voluntary Battery Labeling Guidelines. SWANA continues to work on operational and advocacy solutions for avoiding fires caused by lithium-ion batteries, including [a guide](#) for lithium battery management at material recovery facilities. As shown in the chart below, fires in waste and recycling facilities have increased considerably in the span of five years.



Municipalities often bear the cost of collecting and disposing of this material. Many of SWANA’s public sector members often speak of the challenges of the increasing cost obligations to manage their waste and recycling operations. A county or city may not be able to provide convenient and accessible electronic waste recycling options to residents within their limited budgets. Only 8 out of 23 counties in Maryland (including the City of Baltimore) currently provide free, year-round acceptance of all types of municipal electronics for recycling to their residents. The proposed Covered Electronic Devices Recycling Program would provide new funding sources for collection sites and recycling operations, providing financial relief for the public sector. This will allow more counties to establish electronics recycling programs and will allow counties that currently provide programs to utilize that funding for other critical needs for residents.

Electronic waste recycling has great potential if performed properly. Electronics contain valuable materials that should be recycled rather than lost to a landfill. The United States Geological Survey classifies critical materials as commodities as materials “considered critical to the economic and national security of the United States” (<https://www.usgs.gov/news/national-news-release/interior-releases-2018s-final-list-35-minerals-deemed-critical-us>). These materials are not easily substituted and have a supply risk, making it critical to recover these materials through



recycling so that they can continue to be reused. The list of critical materials includes cobalt, lithium, graphite, and several other minerals that are common in batteries, electronics, and LCD screens.

In addition, many electronics contain mercury, lead, and flame-retardant chemicals which have the potential to negatively affect human health and the environment if not properly managed. If these materials end up in a landfill or incinerator, those facilities will have the additional cost burden of treating their leachate and emissions to appropriately manage these materials. These facilities are heavily regulated by the EPA and the State of Maryland, and they work hard to abide by the regulations and permit requirements. Diverting electronic waste from these facilities will be beneficial for all stakeholders. Under the proposed legislation, a list of Authorized Recyclers eligible for reimbursement would be available, enabling greater accountability and transparency into the end of life of these materials.

SWANA commends the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee for considering SB0686 and supports passage of this bill. If you have any questions about these comments, or about SWANA, please contact Kristyn Oldendorf, SWANA's Director of Public Policy, at koldendorf@swana.org or 240-494-2237.

Thank you for the opportunity to support this bill and for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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