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HB 841 - Environment - Plastic Bottle Waste Reduction - Water Bottle Filling Stations and Reporting

February 21, 2024

Environment and Transportation Committee

Position: Support

On behalf of Food & Water Watch and our 44,000 supporters in Maryland, we support HB 841 and urge you to issue a favorable report to help expand access to tap water and reduce single-use plastic water bottles.

HB 841 would support public access to tap water and help move Maryland off of single-use plastic water bottles. It would require water filling stations for all new constructions that are already required to have drinking fountains, improving public access to tap water by facilitating the refill of reusable water bottles. It would also require the Department of the Environment to collect data on plastic bottle use in the State and identify ways to further expand access to tap water to reduce single-use plastic water bottles.

HB 841 would make it easier for Marylanders to choose tap water over bottled water, which is important for public health. Bottled water is subject to less stringent federal regulation than municipal tap water, and it contains excessive amounts of nano- and microplastics. According to a January 2024 study in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, each liter of bottled water contains at least 110,000 to 370,000 particles of nanoplastics, which are so small that they can invade cells and harm the human body.

HB 841 would help the environment and reduce plastic waste. Bottled water requires up to an estimated 2,000 times as much energy to produce than tap water, and it is estimated to contribute to 1,400 times as much loss of species diversity. This is largely due to the plastic production, mostly polyethylene terephthalate (PET). The vast majority (85 percent) of single-use water bottles across the world enter landfills, where they take up to a millennium to degrade, or become unregulated waste that pollutes our land and oceans. Bottled water production also fuels climate change since fossil fuels are a key feedstock in plastic production.

Again, we support this legislation and urge you to issue a favorable report on HB 841 to help move Maryland off of single-use plastic water bottles.

Sincerely,

Jorge Aguilar
Southern Region Director
Food & Water Watch