



7 February 2025

The Honorable Senator Brian Feldman
Chair of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Letter of Support for SB 0096
Environment – Water Bottle Filling Stations - Requirement

Dear Chairman Feldman and members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee:

I am writing to voice AIA Maryland's support for Senate Bill 0096 – Water Bottle Filling Stations - Requirement. AIA Maryland represents over 2,000 architects in the state of Maryland and advocates for the profession and the quality of the built environment. We recognize that our building codes are developed as a consensus based process that enables jurisdictions to adopt and modify as they see fit. We see this bill as one small change that helps to drive Maryland toward our cleaner and more sustainable goals and may help to diminish the single stream plastics that often end up in our abundant waterways. In my practice, we work across housing, education and healthcare sectors and in almost all cases, the drinking fountains we specify do have a water bottle filling station, but it is not a requirement of the regulations.

Requiring water bottle filling stations at locations where drinking fountains are required is a simple change that can benefit us all. A typical water fountain now is a dual height fountain – two side by side at different heights to accommodate the diverse needs of someone who may be in a wheelchair or have health concerns that make the taller fountain difficult and a higher fountain for those who are standing. Adding the bottle filling station to the accessible fountain enables individuals to choose to avoid single stream plastics and it makes that filling station work for any individual.

Maryland would not be alone in implementing this regulation. In 2015, Washington added the requirement that at least one water bottle filling stations should be provided per floor of buildings that require drinking fountains. In 2026, legislation in Illinois goes into effect wherein water bottle filling stations shall be required in virtually all projects. International Code Council regulations have gradually been moving in this direction, but it is a slow process.

The cost to add a water bottle filling station is a one-time investment of negligible cost that significantly reduces the recurring costs and environmental impact of single-use plastics. According to the container recycling institute, 86% of disposable water bottles used in the United States become garbage or litter, adding volume to our landfills and adding about 2.5 million tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere annually to make those bottles. While filling stations will not eliminate the issue of single use plastic bottles, it will move our state toward a better future, requiring less to be made and collected.

We understand that there has been some concerns expressed about this legislation, indicating that building owners do not want to install the bottle filling stations where properties have sinks that can be used. Please do not be confused by this issue. When a drinking fountain is required by code, there is to be at least one hi-lo drinking fountain in a building to provide a spout for standing people and one for individuals in wheelchairs. When multiple drinking fountains are required, at least half of them are required to be accessible. In the plumbing code, a sink is not an approved alternate for a drinking fountain and a sink is not

necessarily accessible. Providing a bottle filling station in a location where a drinking fountain is required, would only have the minimal incremental cost of the filling station as a manufactured part of the drinking fountain/water filling station. A brief poll of our board revealed that no one could recall an instance where an owner rejected the change to include a bottle filling station as a part of the water fountain on a project.

We are pleased to support this bill and we ask for your to vote in favor of SB 0096.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'C. Parts', written over a light blue rectangular background.

Chris Parts, AIA
Director, Past President, AIA Maryland