



# NATIONAL AQUARIUM<sup>®</sup>

**Date:** February 11, 2025

**Bill:** SB 96 – Water Bottle Filling Stations Requirement

**Position:** Support

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Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee:

The National Aquarium respectfully requests a favorable report for SB 96. This legislation would require that a water bottle filling station or a combined water bottle filling station and drinking fountain be installed in new construction or renovations beginning October 1, 2025.

One of the National Aquarium's three overarching conservation goals is to stop plastic pollution. We do this through a holistic, solutions-focused approach, which includes implementing various plastic reduction and waste diversion measures throughout our operations. For instance, the National Aquarium has eliminated single use plastic foodware from our cafes. As part of our commitment to reducing plastic, the National Aquarium has installed 14 water bottle filling stations for guests and staff. In 2024, the Aquarium's water bottle filling stations avoided use of at least 130,000 plastic water bottles. The Aquarium installed its first water bottle filling stations in 2014 and since then we estimate they have resulted in nearly 3 million plastic bottles avoided.

The plastic pollution crisis has been well-documented as global plastic production has outpaced any other manufactured material, and the U.S. is one of the world's top generators of new plastic production and plastic waste. The vast majority of plastic is made from fossil fuels and every stage of the plastic use cycle contributes to climate change, air pollution and environmental justice concerns. In Maryland, more than 5 billion single use mainly plastic beverage containers are sold every year<sup>1</sup>, yet only about a quarter of those containers are recycled. As Maryland continues to improve recycling, we should also prioritize reduction and reuse. Water bottle filling stations encourage all of us to reduce our plastic consumption and replace single use plastic bottles with a healthier and cheaper alternative.

Addressing the harmful impacts of the plastic pollution crisis requires comprehensive systemic change and this legislation is one common sense solution. Increasing water bottle filling stations will help address plastic pollution, decrease costs of waste management and improve public health.

**We urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on SB 96.**

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<sup>1</sup> Container Recycling Institute, Beverage Market Analysis