

Testimony in Support of HB0277/SB0096
Environment – Water Bottle Filling Stations – Requirement
House Environment and Transportation Committee 5 February 2025
Submitted on 3 February 2025 by 8:10 am

To the Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Janet Ruhl. I live in Galena, MD, on the Sassafras River, and I urge a **favorable** report on HB0277/SB0096. Thank you in advance for your consideration of support.

Plastics pollute the environment throughout their lifecycle, leaching toxic chemicals and breaking down into micro- and nano-plastics, which can now be found everywhere on earth. Only 9% of plastics are recycled, but even recycling has an environmental impact. We must do more to reduce unnecessary plastics from being produced, used and discarded.

This bill requires water bottle filling stations in all new construction or renovation of buildings already required by the plumbing code to install water fountains and will apply to all new contracts signed after October 1, 2025.

This Bill will:

- Allow Maryland consumers to use refillable beverage bottles on a daily basis in buildings with water bottle filling stations.
- Allow Maryland consumers to reduce spending on single-use water bottles.

This Bill works alone but has even more impact when considered with other bills proposed in the Maryland Senate and House to provide mechanisms for reducing plastic bottle manufacturing and waste. The additional proposals - the Bill Allowing Reusable Beverage Containers in Sports Venues (HB0639), the Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program (SB0346/HB0232), and the Post-consumer Plastic Recycled Content Program (HB0069) - will:

- Allow Maryland consumers to use refillable beverage bottles not only on a daily basis in buildings with water bottle filling stations but also at sports events.
- Provide Maryland consumers with incentives to return single-use plastic bottles instead of discarding the bottles in landfills or as roadside litter.
- Create reliable markets for post-consumer plastic.
- Reduce production of virgin plastic.

I **support** Bill HB0277/SB0096 requiring Water Bottle Filling Stations bill for multiple reasons. I lead and have led roadside and river trash removal efforts for decades. One of the main trash items is plastic beverage bottles. In addition, I use refillable beverage bottles but, in many situations, personal reusable beverage bottles are not allowed and I must purchase beverages in wasteful single-use bottles.

Thank you for your consideration, and I look to this committee to give HB0277/SB0096 a **favorable** report.

Sincerely,
Janet C. Ruhl