



Date: March 27, 2025

Bill: SB 901 - Environment – Packaging Materials – Producer Responsibility Plans

Position: Support with amendments

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Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Committee:

Establishing Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for packaging materials, a significant portion of which are made from single-use plastic, would require producers to share responsibility for and materially contribute to the rising costs of managing waste and pollution created by the products they put on the market. The National Aquarium appreciates the leadership of Senator Augustine and all bill sponsors on this issue and supports establishing an EPR for packaging framework through legislation that includes appropriate oversight by the state along with clear and enforceable performance standards and accountability measures.

Stopping plastic pollution is one of the National Aquarium's three strategic conservation goals. The plastic pollution crisis has been well-documented as global plastic production has outpaced any other manufactured material, with a substantial portion of plastics manufactured used for packaging<sup>1</sup>. Plastic packaging makes up about 28% of our waste stream, and the U.S. is one of the world's top generators of new plastic production and plastic waste.<sup>2</sup> The U.S. spends at least \$11 billion to clean up trash 'leaked' into the environment<sup>3</sup>. Local governments in Maryland, like others around the nation and the world, are unable to keep up with the sheer volume of plastic waste. More than half of all plastic ever made is accumulating in landfills or in the environment<sup>4</sup>. Plastic breaks down into smaller pieces and endangers wildlife, contaminates the global food web and transports toxins harmful to human health. The burden and costs of mismanaged waste that becomes plastic pollution are varied, complex, and borne primarily by municipalities and taxpayers.

In short, our current waste management practices are unsustainable and require comprehensive systemic change. It is past time for Maryland to enact additional policies that support reduced production of and demand for plastic; encourage behavior change; clean up existing pollution; and provide for education and outreach. One key part of a comprehensive approach to address plastic pollution is a strong framework of EPR for packaging materials that complement other measures including minimum recycled content standards and additional policies that prioritize source reduction and reuse.

The National Aquarium recognizes amendments made in the Senate, including clarification that legislative intent encompasses minimizing environmental and human health impacts of packaging, and the need for coordinated implementation of a future beverage container deposit return program. The amendment omitting the 25% packaging reduction goal is concerning. If packaging reduction and other performance goals are not clarified in statute, subsequent rulemaking processes should allow for public review and comment on proposed performance goals and establishing criteria to ensure Producer Responsibility Organization plans provide adequate benefits to the environment and human health.

We are committed to continuing to work toward strong legislation that enables Maryland to improve producer accountability for waste management that reduces the burden placed on

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<sup>1</sup> Geyer, R. et al. 2017. Production, use, and fate of all plastics ever made. *Science Advances* (3):7. DOI: 10.1126/sciadv.1700782

<sup>2</sup> National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2021. *Reckoning with the U.S. Role in Global Ocean Plastic Waste*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/26132>.

<sup>3</sup> The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2021. *Reckoning with the U.S. Role in Global Ocean Plastic Waste*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/26132>.

<sup>4</sup> Geyer, R. et al. 2017.

taxpayers along with the harmful impacts of plastic pollution on our wildlife, ecosystems and people. **We urge the Committee to consider these concerns prior to advancing this important legislation.**

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