



February 19, 2020

Delegate Kumar P. Barve, Chair
Environment and Transportation Committee

Delegate Dereck E. Davis, Chair
Economic Matters Committee

RE: Maryland State bill HB296, Single-Use Plastic Straws

Dear Delegates Barve and Davis,

Surfrider Foundation's Ocean City Chapter would like to express our support for Maryland State bill HB296, which would enact a statewide ban on plastic drinking straws, except for persons with disabilities.

The Surfrider Foundation is a grassroots environmental organization dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of the world's ocean, waves, and beaches for all people. We submit these comments on behalf of our 80 chapters, 90 youth clubs, and more than 500,000 supporters, activists, and members in the United States, including our local chapter most affected by this proposed legislation: our Ocean City Chapter.

Our chapter, located in Ocean City, holds numerous beach cleanups each year, and plastic straws are consistently one of the most commonly found items at every cleanup. Plastic straws, like other plastic litter, are a petroleum-based product that does not biodegrade. Instead, they break down into smaller and smaller pieces that are often mistaken for food by marine wildlife, including commercially sought fish species.

Our Chapter also worked with local businesses and individuals in implementing our "Strawless Summer" initiative. Over 60 restaurants and businesses signed our online pledge, along with almost 500 individuals-promising to either serve straws only upon request (businesses), or refuse plastic straws when ordering at restaurants (individuals).

The program was overwhelmingly successful, and the entire community embraced it. Here are the local businesses that participated in our program, and the pledge itself:

oceancity.surfrider.org/these-restaurants-have-signed-our-strawless-summer-pledge

Many municipalities have to comply with stormwater regulations limiting trash in waterways and spend substantial taxpayer dollars trying to control, capture, and remove trash, including plastic straws. Bills similar to HB296 are already in place in several parts of the country, including California, Seattle, Charleston, Portland, and Miami Beach.

If a restaurant wants to continue providing straws to all customers, there are a wide variety of paper straws commercially available. Products made from paper biodegrade more quickly if littered and are less toxic to humans and the environment. If a customer needs a straw, they can still request one in all situations.

As we work together to ensure our communities are healthy and clean, reducing plastic straw usage will reduce litter and make our waterways and beaches more fishable, swimmable, and enjoyable. Reducing plastic litter also saves our communities and state money, in reduced clean up and disposal costs.

This session, please prioritize the health of all Marylanders and support bill HB296.

Thank you for considering our comments,

Malcolm Taylor, Vice Chair,
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