

**HB 296**  
**Environment – Single-Use Plastic Straws – Use in a Food Service Business**

**Testifying in favor of the bill**  
**Before the House Economic Matters Committee**  
**February 19, 2020**

Good afternoon. My name is Elvia Thompson and I am Co-founder and President of Annapolis Green, a local nonprofit that advocates for sustainability and protection of the environment. My office is at State Circle and Maryland Avenue.

While Annapolis Green is an environmental organization, what we focus on is behavior change. We have been working for some time on behavior change with regard to single-use plastic including plastic straws. In fact, we were the first organization to call for reduction or elimination in the Annapolis area.

House Bill 296 is exactly the legislation we need in Maryland.

We are appreciative that the bill also contains a provision for accommodating the needs of people with disabilities who may need a plastic or otherwise flexible straw in order to consume a beverage.

We are also very pleased that this legislation includes single-use stirrers whose “in-use” time is a matter of seconds while the material – plastic – stays with us in the environment for centuries.

Finally, we are also pleased that the implementation date is just months away – October of this year.

By this time you must have seen the video of a sea turtle with a straw stuck in its nose and the pain and bleeding the animal endured when divers removed it.

You may have seen video showing marine animals that had died from ingesting plastic debris that includes straws – all 500 million a day just in the United States. These include dead albatross with stomachs full of plastic and whales with their digestive systems clogged with plastic. But alarm about plastic straws in our waterways goes beyond these images.

Plastic straws are part of the worldwide plastic crisis. Along with other types of plastics, straws break up into microplastic bits that are ingested by wildlife, ending up in our food supply. Do you want to eat a plastic straw? I don't.

There is no throwaway plastic product that is easier to get out of our lives than the plastic straw. Unless a person has a disability that requires it, there is just no need for a straw in order to enjoy a beverage – it is just a habit.

Typically the hospitality industry provides a straw for water or a soda but not for coffee, wine or beer. Why? Is it harder to drink water or a soda than coffee, beer or wine? Of course not. It's just a habit – a learned behavior encouraged by the plastic manufacturers and ultimately by the petroleum industry.

Let us lead other states in our country in reducing the plastic load on our environment as we did with expanded polystyrene last year. I ask you for a favorable vote on this bill.

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