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Committee: Economic Matters
Testimony on: HB 987 - “Recycling - Hotels”
Position: Support with amendments
Hearing Date: February 19, 2020

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club supports HB 987, a bill that would require hotels to provide for recycling by guests and staff in accordance with the recycling plan for the county in which the hotel is located.

For decades, many Americans have sorted their residential waste, separating recyclables from their other trash every week. However, travelers often do not have the same opportunity when staying in lodgings away from home. Under this bill, guests in Maryland hotels would be able to recycle while away from home. Hotel guests typically generate about two pounds of waste per guest per night,¹ a significant amount considering that Maryland hosted about 19 million overnight travelers in 2018.²

According to the 2014 Maryland Department of the Environment Zero Waste Plan, a 2020 overall recycling goal of 60% was recommended as one way to meet greenhouse gas reduction mandates.³ Maryland, however, is not achieving that goal: in 2017, Maryland residents and businesses recycled just 44% of generated municipal solid waste.⁴ This bill is likely to increase the state’s recycling rate, since the recyclable waste of Maryland’s millions of overnight visitors would be added to that total.

There are two amendments that we believe would assist with implementation of this bill. First, the bill proposes to apply its recycling requirement to “hotels” but does not define that term, and therefore there could be some uncertainty as to who is covered. We urge that bill apply to all lodging establishments, such as inns, lodges, and motels; an appropriate definition of a “lodging establishment” is given in HB354, which also is being heard by this Committee on February 19.

Second, the bill should provide for lodging establishments to display in close proximity to the recycling receptacles a list of the types of materials that are accepted. Travelers will likely be unaware of what is locally recyclable, and providing information to them will make it easier for lodging establishments to collect the recyclables and help avoid contamination of the recycling stream.

We urge a favorable report on this legislation with the proposed strengthening amendments.

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¹ <https://www.greenhotelier.org/our-themes/waste-management/>.

² http://industry.visitmaryland.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Maryland_FY19_AnnualReport-Rev.pdf.

³ https://mde.state.md.us/programs/Marylander/Documents/Zero_Waste_Plan_Draft_12.15.14.pdf.

⁴ <https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/LAND/RecyclingandOperationsprogram/Pages/recyclingrates.aspx>.

Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America’s oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has approximately 800,000 members.