

Date: February 17, 2021

Bill: HB 69, Environment – Single-Use Plastic- Restrictions

Position: Favorable

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Dear Chairman Davis and Members of the Committee:

The National Aquarium respectfully requests a favorable report for **House Bill 69, Environment – Single-Use Plastic- Restrictions**, which will reduce the harmful impacts of single-use plastics in the environment while promoting increased public education and positive behavior change.

The plastic pollution crisis is well-documented, and updated estimates indicate that globally, about 20 million metric tons of plastic enters aquatic ecosystems each year – or about 11% of all plastic waste generated<sup>1</sup>. That is the equivalent of more than two dump trucks full of plastic emitted to the ocean every minute. Plastic breaks down into smaller pieces, particles which endanger wildlife and contaminate the global food web.

The best solution is to reduce the use of disposable plastic. In 2017 the National Aquarium eliminated all single-use plastic foodware from our building, and replaced these disposable plastic products with reusable, compostable or more sustainable recycling options. Additionally, the National Aquarium has led cleanup events across the state of Maryland for over twenty years. During the 2019 International Coastal Cleanup, volunteers picked up a total of 80,727 pieces of plastic debris along Maryland shorelines, including 604 utensils, 1,168 lids, and 4,309 straws/stirrers.



Caption: Straws picked up by National Aquarium volunteers at Fort McHenry in Baltimore, MD.

We believe that plastic pollution is an issue we can solve in our lifetime. Requiring establishments to provide certain items only when requested by the customer will increase public awareness of the impact single-use plastic products have on the environment, while at the same time potentially save businesses money by providing fewer single-use items.

**We urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 69.**

Contact:

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<sup>1</sup> Borrelle, S.B. et al. (2020) Predicted growth in plastic waste exceeds efforts to mitigate plastic pollution. *Science*, 369:1515.