



Date: February 9, 2021

Bill: House Bill 99 – Beverage Container Deposit Program- Establishment and Advisory Commission

Position: Support

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Dear Chairman Barve and Members of the Committee:

The National Aquarium respectfully requests your support for **House Bill 99 – Beverage Container Deposit Program- Establishment and Advisory Commission**, which will limit the harmful impact single-use plastics, such as plastic bottles, have on neighborhoods and wildlife across Maryland.

The National Aquarium believes that plastic pollution is an issue we can stop in our lifetime. This bill is one critically important step in making that a reality. 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. Furthermore, marine plastic pollution costs the U.S. approximately \$2 trillion annually<sup>2</sup>.

The best way to stop or reverse this trend is through a comprehensive and holistic solution. The National Aquarium defines a comprehensive solution using four key approaches: stop plastic pollution at its source; change behaviors; clean up existing plastic pollution; and provide education and outreach. No single approach will stop plastic pollution. Comprehensive solutions must contain policies, such as container deposit laws, that address each of the four areas.

In 2019, 14,170 plastic bottles and caps were cleaned up from Maryland’s coastline through the International Coastal Cleanup. Container deposit programs are considered the most effective tool for reducing the amount of litter in communities. These programs incentivize Marylanders to consider how their choices, such as disposing beverage containers, can impact the environment and encourage positive behavior changes. Currently, ten states and Guam have enacted deposit programs. States with container deposit laws report significant reduction in litter from beverage containers as well as overall litter. In addition, recycling rates have been reported as more than double that of states without container deposit laws.

A recent study conducted to aid in the development of a deposit return system (DRS) in Washington compared seven existing DRSs from across the world. Each of these potential future systems outperformed the current system and result in better net benefits, including increasing recycling rates, capturing more high value materials, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and creating jobs<sup>3</sup>.

By passing HB 99, Maryland will reduce the amount of harmful plastic entering waterways and littering communities. **We urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 99.**

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.

<sup>2</sup> Forrest, A. et al. (2019). Eliminating Plastic Pollution: How a Voluntary Contribution From Industry Will Drive the Circular Plastics Economy. *Frontiers in Marine Science*, 6:627.

<sup>3</sup> Eunomia Research & Consulting Inc. (2020). Container Deposit Study: Analysis of Residential Packaging and Paper Product Recycling in Washington State.