

Testimony in SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS of HB0036 Environment – Packaging, Containers, and Paper Products – Producer Responsibility

Hearing Date: February 9, 2021

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Lierman

Committee: Environment and Transportation

Submitting: Less Plastic Please

Position: Favorable with amendments

Chairman Barve, Vice Chair Stein and members of the committee,

Finally, something we can all agree on.

We have a plastic waste crisis of epidemic proportions.

We are producing over 300 million tons of plastic every year, almost 50% of which is for single-use purposes – utilized for just a few moments, but on the planet for at least several hundred year. [1] We are eating a credit card worth of plastic a week. [2] This should give us all pause: Microplastics have now been found in placentas of unborn babies.[3]

And what are we doing to address one of the greatest challenges to face the planet? Not much. Current government and industry commitments are likely to reduce annual plastic leakage to the ocean by only 7 per cent. [4]

An implementation delay for action of five years would result in an additional ~80 million metric tons of plastic going into the ocean by 2040.[4]

Tackling this emergency will take a multi-prong approach. Bottle deposit systems, for example, have a long track record of successfully increasing recycling rates and reducing litter. For these reasons, bottles should be exempted from this bill. Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging and Paper Products (EPR for PPP) is another vitally important arrow in our quiver.

Here's why:

American generators more waste than any other country in the world, but recycles less than any other developed nation. US represents 4 percent of the world's population but produces 12 percent of municipal waste. [5]

Packaging accounting for the largest percentage of solid waste at 40% and taxpayers pays.[6]

Communities are struggling to fund and manage robust and resilient recycling programs. [7]

The benefits of EPR illustrates the importance of having this legislation in Maryland:

- Dedicated, non-taxpayer funding to sustainably support collection, recovery and recycling, and management, where necessary

- The possibility of providing incentives to producers to incorporate environmental considerations into the design of their products and packaging through eco-modulation
- A more consistent and predictable system that enables states and, possibly, regions to take a more unified approach to strategic planning around recycling
- Potential for increased investment in the end-markets and recycling infrastructure
- Improve packaging design so that it is more recyclable and uses recycled content [8]

Think of EPR for PPP as an insurance policy for Maryland municipalities when global recycling markets fluctuate.

Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging and Paper Products is not a new concept for most of the world. EPR for packaging is already effectively used in Australia, Brazil, and Canada, all 28 countries in the EU, and Russia. These systems successfully shift costs of managing recycling from taxpayers to the producers of packaging materials and increase recycling rates to well over 50%. [8]

Ultimately, Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging Materials law is needed so our municipalities and taxpayers are no longer unfairly forced to shoulder the burden of managing and paying for recycling programs. The responsibilities of recycling need to be shared with the producers of the packaging who are currently profiting off of having us foot the bill.

I urge you to vote favorably with amendments on HB0036.

[1] <https://www.nrdc.org/stories/single-use-plastics-101#why>

[2] <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/06/you-eat-a-credit-card-s-worth-of-plastic-a-week-research-says/>

[3] <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0160412020322297>

[4] <https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/breaking-plastic-wave-comprehensive-assessment-pathways-towards-stopping-ocean-plastic-pollution>

[5] <https://www.nrdc.org/onearth/united-states-most-wasteful-country-world>

[6] <https://www.epa.gov/facts-and-figures-about-materials-waste-and-recycling/containers-and-packaging-product-specific-data>

[7] <https://www.wastedive.com/news/what-chinese-import-policies-mean-for-all-50-states/510751/>

[8]

https://d2ouvy59p0dg6k.cloudfront.net/downloads/2019_wwf_epr_legal_framework_analysis_vf.pdf