

Testimony Supporting HB1226
House Environment & Transportation Committee
March 9, 2022

Position: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

Clean Water Action strongly supports HB1226 to divert mattresses from our landfills and incinerators and support the development of mattress recycling industry and jobs in Maryland. We encourage the committee to consider an amendment regarding landfilling vs incinerating contaminated mattresses, and to report favorably on this bill.

A mattress stewardship program in Maryland would create significant environmental and economic benefits. Mattresses are large and bulky, taking up significant volume in our landfills. Almost 4.5 million mattresses and 4.5 million box springs are sent to the landfill or incinerator every year in the United States, according to Nationwide Mattress Recycling, amounting to 250 million pounds of mattress material. Landfilling or incinerating mattresses also bears the risk of the flame retardants contained in many mattresses entering the atmosphere and harming public health. With landfill capacity and the public health burden of trash incineration gaining increasing importance across Maryland counties, diverting mattresses from landfills and incinerators is a promising opportunity to move toward a Zero Waste future.

Mattresses are extremely recyclable, and doing so - like all Zero Waste strategies - creates local jobs. Steel innersprings, once separated from the rest of the mattress, can be recycled and used again; and wooden frames can be recycled into other wood products. Even the foam and fibers in mattresses, including newer foam mattresses, can be recycled into new mattress materials and other products, from oil filters to carpet padding. Jobs in mattress recycling are local and do not require prior skills or formal education, creating job opportunities for residents in Maryland communities. Passing HB1226 will spur the development of mattress recycling businesses in Maryland, keeping bulky materials out of landfills and incinerators, and creating local jobs in the Zero Waste economy.

We encourage the committee to consider an amendment regarding whether it is preferable to landfill or incinerate those mattresses that cannot be recycled. HB1226 currently bans mattresses from being landfilled entirely, but says that mattresses which cannot be recycled due to contamination or other health and safety reasons may be incinerated. We are concerned that this provision may cause environmental harm and be unworkable in the long term. Incinerating contaminated mattresses may

risk releasing those contaminants into the atmosphere, as well as the environmentally harmful emissions that incinerators emit inherently. Additionally, with only two municipal trash incinerators located in Maryland that their host communities are working to close, this provision may soon prove unworkable if there are no incinerators left in Maryland. We encourage the committee to consider an amendment that does not require that mattresses be incinerated, to ensure that those few mattresses that cannot be recycled have a disposal option in the future.

Thank you,

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