



Testimony of David Levine, ASBN Executive President

HB 700, An Act concerning Environment – Products and Packaging – Labeling, Marketing, and Advertising for Recycling

Maryland House Environment and Transportation Committee

February 18, 2022

Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of H.B. 700, An Act Concerning Environment – Products and Packaging – Labelling, Marketing and Advertising for Recycling.

ASBN is a movement builder in partnership with the business and investor community, developing and advocating for solutions for policymakers, business leaders, and investors in support of an equitable, regenerative, and just economy that benefits all—people and planet.

As a multi-issue, membership organization advocating on behalf of every business sector, size, and geography, ASBN and its association members collectively represent over 250,000 businesses across our networks. Justice, equity, diversity and inclusion are inherent in everything we do, while our advocacy is focused on three broad priorities: Climate, Democracy and an Inclusive Economy.

There are three basic reasons, all of them grounded in good business practice and economics, for our support for HB 700. They are: expense, efficiency, environment and equity.

As I'm sure this committee is aware, according to current EPA statistics, the U.S. produces almost 36 million tons of plastic every year, much of it from single use, representing over 12 percent of all municipal solid waste. Despite marketing claims and the ubiquitous "chasing arrows" symbol for recycling, overall recycling was less than nine percent.¹

¹ <https://www.epa.gov/facts-and-figures-about-materials-waste-and-recycling/plastics-material-specific-data>

And while the recycling rate for certain plastic materials and containers was higher, in no case did it even reach one-third of what was produced. As a result, 5.6 million tons of plastics were burned in 2018, the last year for which there are statistics, representing 16% of all municipal solid waste and 27 million tons of plastics went into landfills, representing 18% of municipal solid waste.

The expense of disposing of all those materials through burning or burial rests squarely on the shoulders of Maryland taxpayers since it never shows up on the profit and loss statement of the plastic producers. While Maryland has made laudable strides in reducing costs through recycling programs, it is clear that too much waste – especially single-use plastics – continues to be a problem and an unnecessary expense.

From an efficiency perspective, it is equally clear that the current numbering system is not only confusing, but in many cases, producers are mislabeling products by claiming they can be recycled. Other producers are simply slapping on the recycling label, even though the products cannot be recycled. In other cases, when they are tossed into a recycling bin, the materials actually can spoil everything else in the bin and turn it all into waste that must be burned or buried. That's bad business and a greater expense that is passed along to the citizens of Maryland.

We know that there are negative environmental impacts from landfills and incinerators, and these are exacerbated by the release of toxic materials in plastics. Those environmental impacts carry their own costs, once again born by the citizens of Maryland.

Finally, this bill will address the issue of equity by requiring all plastic producers to adhere to the same rules and definitions, leveling the playing field for companies who are trying to do the right thing versus those who try to gain unfair advantage through claims that are either false or based in intentional ignorance. It will also grant consumers a measure of equity in knowing that when they see a recycling claim or symbol, they can be assured it is legitimate.

For all those reasons of expense, efficiency, environment and equity, ASBN asks you to support HB 700. Thank you again for the opportunity to present this testimony.