



February 17, 2022

**Senate Bill 292**

**Packaging Materials – Producer Responsibility**

**Senate Finance Committee**

**Position: FAVORABLE**

The Anne Arundel County Administration supports Senate Bill 292, and urges the Committee to vote favorably for this legislation.

Packaging, especially packaging comprised of thin-film plastics, continues to threaten local ecosystems and the Chesapeake Bay, and continues to cost Anne Arundel County taxpayers millions of dollars each year. We have all seen the piles of plastic bags, plastic bottles, and other plastic packaging waste piled up on the sides of our roads or sticking out of the mud of our riverbanks. For years scientists have warned us that these plastics may have long-term consequences to our ecosystems. Then in August of 2021, researchers from Pennsylvania State University and the Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences confirmed what had long been feared: 94 percent of microplastic pollution entering the Chesapeake Bay from its rivers remains within the system and is not flushed out to the ocean.<sup>1</sup> The plastics break down into smaller and smaller pieces to become embedded in the Bay's sediments, enter the Bay's food chain and mingle with sand on the Bay's shorelines where it will remain for generations to come.

Anne Arundel County spends approximately \$10 M each year on single-stream recycling efforts. While we are proud that our collection system diverts more than one-quarter of household waste annually, the service is imperfect and costly. Oftentimes, unrecyclable, thin-film plastic packaging is impossible to separate from other high-quality recyclables. The thin-film plastic gets caught in the recycling center's machinery, and contaminates larger loads of recyclables. Anne Arundel County must then pay a penalty, and the profitable recyclables must instead be buried in a landfill.

This bill gives Maryland an opportunity to significantly reduce plastic and other packaging waste. It ensures that the burden of reducing this waste is no longer solely shouldered by consumers and local governments, but also by the industry. It sets reasonable expectations for the industry to develop plans to responsibly reduce, reuse, recycle, and dispose of this harmful waste, and provides local governments

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<sup>1</sup> Lopez, A.G. et al. August, 2021. Estuaries as Filters for Riverine Microplastics: Simulations in a Large, Coastal-Plain Estuary. Published in *Frontiers in Marine Science*: Volume 8. Available at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fmars.2021.715924/full>.

a means to reduce waste transport, disposal, and recycling costs. It is time to lower the burden on local taxpayers and give Marylanders a chance to enjoy a plastic-free environment.

For these reasons, Anne Arundel County requests a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 292.