



Date: February 17, 2022

Bill: SB 292 - Environment – Packaging Materials – Producer Responsibility

Position: Support

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Dear Chair Kelley and Members of the Committee:

The National Aquarium respectfully requests your support for **Senate Bill 292 - Environment – Packaging Materials – Producer Responsibility**, which would advance Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for packaging materials – increasing efficiency of waste management, reducing taxpayer costs of addressing a rising tide of plastic waste, and incentivizing increased recycling as part of framework to reduce waste throughout the state.

Stopping plastic pollution is one of the National Aquarium’s three strategic conservation goals. The plastic pollution crisis has been well-documented as global plastic production has outpaced any other manufactured material, with a substantial portion of plastics manufactured used for packaging<sup>1</sup>. Globally, more than 8 million metric tons of plastic enters aquatic ecosystems each year – the equivalent of more than a dump truck 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. The burden and costs of mismanaged waste that becomes plastic pollution are varied, complex, and borne primarily by municipalities and taxpayers. The U.S. spends at least \$11 billion to clean up trashed ‘leaked’ into the environment<sup>2</sup>.

In short, our current waste management system is unsustainable and requires comprehensive systemic change. It is past time to stop plastic pollution at its source; change behaviors; clean up existing pollution; and provide education and outreach. Establishing EPR for packaging materials is one key part of a comprehensive solution. This bill would result in a better understanding of current recycling needs across the state and incentivize packaging producers to meet shared performance standards for recyclability, postconsumer recycled content, and waste reduction. EPR for packaging materials will support improved economic efficiency by ensuring packaging producers share responsibility for and materially contribute to the rising costs of managing waste created by the products they put on the market.

EPR policies are not new; the approach exists for other products from batteries to mattresses. EPR for packaging has been implemented in Canada and most European countries; EPR for packaging laws were recently enacted in Oregon and Maine, with legislation currently being proposed in multiple other states including New York, California, and Washington. Many relevant businesses are already subject to EPR packaging policies in other countries where they operate. By establishing EPR for packaging, Maryland has an opportunity to create a framework that reduces the harmful impacts plastic pollution has on our wildlife, ecosystems and human health, while improving producer accountability for waste management and reducing the burden placed on taxpayers.

**We urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on SB292.**

Contact:

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<sup>1</sup> Geyer, R. et al. 2017. Production, use, and fate of all plastics ever made. *Science Advances* (3):7. DOI: 10.1126/sciadv.1700782

<sup>2</sup> The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2021. *Reckoning with the U.S. Role in Global Ocean Plastic Waste*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/26132>.