



Bill: HB 342

Date: February 20, 2023

Position: Support

HB 342 Environment – Plastic Products – Postconsumer Recycled Content Program

Dear Chair Barve, Vice-Chair Stein and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

We enthusiastically support HB 342 and the goal of increasing post-consumer content in the qualifying categories of everyday items sold and used in Maryland, gradually requiring up to 50% recycled content by dates that range from 2025 to 2039. Establishing standards is one way to address the growing plastic waste problem with the seriousness it requires.

Plastic production is projected to triple by 2050, and concern about pollution in our waterways and the health impacts of microplastics, which have been discovered in human lungs, blood, and breastmilk, is rising. Scientists estimate that the average human ingests a credit card's worth of microplastics, which shed from plastic products, textiles, packaging, etc. into the air and drinking water, each week. These tiny pieces end up bioaccumulating in fish and degrading the quality of our fisheries, beaches, and local economies that are dependent upon the Chesapeake Bay and Potomac River.¹

Packaging is a significant category of our solid waste production at 28%, and 40% of that is plastic.² Establishing a requirement for post-consumer content in goods and increasing that percentage over time will strengthen the market for recycled content. This bill is consistent with approaches in other states such as New Jersey, California, Oregon and Washington. An accompanying deposit-return system would function well with HB 342. Waivers should only be applicable to producers with extenuating circumstances.

Strengthening use of recycled content instills greater consumer confidence and builds trust in recycling programs. These are critical steps as they will lead to better recycling participation and less litter, like the nearly 30,000 plastic bottles that Potomac Riverkeeper Network volunteers have pulled out of the Potomac since 2021.

Contact: Serena Moncion serena@prknetwork.org

¹ See "Human Impact" section <https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/news/ncei-releases-groundbreaking-microplastics-database>

² See: <https://www.epa.gov/facts-and-figures-about-materials-waste-and-recycling/containers-and-packaging-product-specific>