

**February 22, 2023**

**Testimony on HB 31**  
**Environment – Products and Packaging – Labeling, Marketing, and Advertising**  
**Environment and Transportation**

**Position: Favorable**

Common Cause Maryland supports HB 31, which would clarify plastic recycling labeling, and protect consumers from deceptive or misleading environmental marketing claims.

As we continue to see examples of climate change's devastating impacts worldwide, many consumers are looking for ways to reduce their carbon footprint, and, at face value, recycling seems like an easy, accessible option. Consumers may be surprised to learn, however, that not every product labeled with the recognizable "chasing arrow" symbol can be recycled. To determine whether an item can be recycled, one must look at the number within the symbol. In Maryland, different counties recycle different numbers, and this little-known detail oftentimes leads to recycling contamination: when non-recyclable items are present in a batch resulting in the entire batch being thrown away. Naturally, seeing the recycling symbol on a product would instantly lead a consumer to think the product could be recycled. Prohibiting non-recyclable items from being labeled with the "chasing arrow" symbol will make recycling decisions clearer for consumers and reduce recycling contamination.

HB 31 would not only improve recycling labeling, but would implement stronger standards for producer transparency and consumer protection. As consumers are increasingly making purchasing decisions based on the marketed "eco-friendliness" of products, companies are taking advantage of these changing demand behaviors, trying to capitalize on the sociocultural shift by making sometimes exaggerated or even entirely false marketing claims about the environmental impact of their products/supply chains. 66% of consumers in the U.S. are willing to pay more for a product that is sustainable, creating a clear financial incentive for companies to either make their operations and products more sustainable – or to give consumers the impression that they have.

Consumers want to do the right thing for the environment, and should be able to confidently make purchasing and post-use disposal decisions that align with their values. HB 31 would implement common-sense regulations, protecting our climate, consumers, and the transparency that is critical in a democracy.

We strongly urge a favorable report.