

Testimony in Support of HB284 Environment – Reducing Packaging Materials – Producer Responsibility
Environment and Transportation Committee – February 22, 2023

Committee Members: I am happy to offer my support for HB284. I am using this opportunity to provide testimony on this legislation as a former lead sponsor while a member of the House of Delegates and am now proud to see Senators Augustine, Elfreth, and Hettleman champion this issue. I appreciate the opportunity to continue the effort to move this specific legislation forward and bring additional attention to this issue.

The Goal: Save taxpayers money, support local governments, and reduce waste. Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) shifts the costs of recycling from taxpayers and local governments to the producers of packaging and requires producers to make smarter, more environmentally conscious packaging choices.

The Problem: Maryland taxpayers currently bear the sole burden of paying to manage and dispose of waste, including packaging, primarily (though not exclusively) through local governments. These local governments and taxpayers have no say in decisions made by producers about packaging type, however, and yet must manage (landfill, incinerate, recycle, compost, etc.) the packaging that comes to them, often at a great cost..

Packaging decisions made by producers have a dramatic impact on local government budgets. The past Director of Montgomery County’s Department of Environmental Protection highlighted the economic implications of a simple packaging material decision through the example of two nearly identical cups. Montgomery County lacks the infrastructure to recycle #6 plastic (polystyrene) cups. A #6 cup costs the county \$135 per ton to remove from the recycling stream and incinerate. On the other hand, a nearly identical #1 plastic (polyethylene terephthalate) cup can easily be recycled and sold for a profit of \$375 per ton. Because the cost of that decision is born solely by the taxpayer and local government, right now producers have no incentive to choose #1 plastic over #6 plastic and taxpayers are left footing the bill. This bill can help remedy that problem.

To further underscore the issue, variable recycling markets are upending local government budgets. For example, in 2010, Baltimore City made \$598,325 in revenue from its recycling program; in 2019, the City’s recycling system bore a loss of \$1,636,136. Similarly, Charles County made \$30,000 in revenue through recycling in 2015 and faced a loss of \$700,000 in 2019. The cost of running Frederick County’s recycling program doubled in just three years, with a cost increase of 99% from 2017 to 2020.

The Solution: Bringing EPR for packaging to Maryland will shift the costs of disposing packaging materials from Marylanders and local governments to the corporations producing the excessive and often harmful materials that are costly for local governments and taxpayers to manage.



This legislation presents a comprehensive solution that provides reimbursement for recycling operations and funding to modernize recycling infrastructure to meet local governments' needs; sets environmental goals for reducing packaging, using postconsumer recycled content in packaging, and improving recyclability and recycling rates of packaging; and creates more reliable markets for recycled content to increase profits for local governments.

EPR for packaging is gaining momentum in the U.S. with bipartisan support. Maryland taxpayers should not be left behind footing recycling bills that their counterparts in other states are not.

This bill will support local governments, make better use of taxpayer dollars, bring needed infrastructure investments to our recycling systems, and help the environment. **I urge a favorable report on HB284.**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brooke E. Lierman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Brooke E. Lierman
Comptroller of Maryland
