

HB31: Environment – Products and Packaging – Labeling, Marketing, and Advertising for Recycling

Environment and Transportation Committee

February 22, 2022

Position: Favorable

Maryland PIRG is a state based, small donor funded public interest advocacy organization with grassroots members across the state. We work to find common ground around common sense solutions that will help ensure a healthier, safer, more secure future.

Numerous studies, including one by the [Consumer Brand Association](#), have shown that most consumers assume the chasing arrows symbol signifies that an item is able to be recycled. Many of us take the time to check every container we use, and if we see that chasing arrows symbol somewhere on the container, we rinse it out thoroughly, and throw it in the recycling bin.

Unfortunately, according to the Maryland Department of Environment, Maryland's plastic recycling rate is less than 15 percent.¹

Many manufacturers use the “chasing arrows” symbol on their hard plastic containers on the bottom of their container, regardless of whether the type of plastic used can be recycled, or whether additional packaging on top of the plastic container, like a plastic sleeve, makes it impossible for the container to be recycled. Many manufacturers place an additional chasing arrows symbol prominently on the front or back of their packaging, regardless of the actual recyclability of the product.

We have a plastic waste crisis on our hands. Every piece of plastic that is not recyclable or goes unrecycled ends up littering our communities and waterways, burned in our incinerators, or buried in leaky landfills, harming public health and our communities.

Plastics are seeping into every corner of our planet, from the [Chesapeake Bay](#) to the depths of [Lake Tahoe](#) to the bottom of the [Mariana Trench](#). Plastic waste is also creating a financial burden ultimately borne by consumers and taxpayers, who have to pay to get rid of it. We need companies to start using recycled material to create their products, and ensure those products are made so that they can be recycled back into new products at the end of their life. We know that as consumers, it is impossible for the marketplace to reward good actors, and avoid bad actors, if products are not properly labeled.

HB31 will help clarify for consumers which products are able to be recycled, and which will almost certainly end up in a landfill, incinerator, or littering our neighborhoods and waterways..

We urge a favorable report in support of the bill.

¹ <https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/land/Documents/MSWMR%20%2720.pdf>, p31.