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SB686

February 18, 2025

TO: Members of the Senate Energy, Education and the Environment Committee

FROM: Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations

RE: Senate Bill 686 - Environment - Extended Producer Responsibility for Batteries and Battery-Containing Products (Battery Stewardship Act)

POSITION: Support

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** Senate Bill (SB) 686

SB686 requires producers of batteries and battery-containing products to individually or as part of a battery stewardship organization to submit a battery stewardship plan to accept covered batteries and battery-containing products to the Department of the Environment for review and approval. The bill also restricts a producer of certain batteries or battery-containing products from selling, offering for sale, distributing, or importing certain batteries or battery-containing products without an approved plan. The bill establishes that a battery stewardship organization shall cover all costs of a battery stewardship program, including the costs to collect and process the covered batteries and battery-containing products as well as costs associated with public awareness and participation.

The City of Baltimore's Department of Public Works' (DPW) Less Waste, Better Baltimore plan advocates for extended producer responsibility initiatives to further waste diversion in Baltimore City. Currently, the City does not host their own battery recycling program and would benefit from the funding and support of the proposed battery EPR program to collect batteries at the 5 residential

recycling centers in the city. The bills requirement that the battery stewardship organization cover the cost of collecting the batteries as well as the public education for the program is critical, as access to funding for education and outreach limits DPW's ability to affect behavior change and divert waste.

Additionally, SB686 will improve access to battery recycling and increase safety for DPW crews that collect trash and recycling from our residents. In 2024 there were two separate incidents of battery-related fires from material collected from curbside recycling by DPW. Also, an estimated 5,000 fires occur annually at recycling facilities, and an increasing number of these fires are attributed to batteries. Diversion of batteries for recycling will improve safety conditions along the full stream of our recycling process from our laborers to those at the materials recovery facility.

Finally, Extended Producer Responsibility for Batteries and Battery-Containing Products will decrease contamination of our recycling stream and help Baltimore achieve the state-mandated 35% recycling rate. Our residential contamination rate of single stream volume was about 20% in 2024 and reducing that volume could save the City up to approximately \$40,000 per year spent on contamination at the materials recovery facility.

The BCA remains committed to waste diversion efforts within the City, and across the state. For the above reasons, the BCA respectfully requests a favorable report for SB686.