



# SIERRA CLUB

## MARYLAND CHAPTER

P.O. Box 278  
Riverdale, MD 20738

**Committee:** Education, Energy, and the Environment

**Testimony on:** SB591 “Environment – Covered Electronic Devices Recycling Program – Establishment”

**Position:** Support

**Hearing Date:** February 18, 2025

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club supports SB 591, which aims to update Maryland’s existing code to provide increased funding for collection, recycling, refurbishment, and reuse of covered electronic devices. The program would be administered by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE). The costs of administering the program would be financed through registration fees paid by manufacturers; the costs of collecting and recycling electronic devices would be funded by an assessment added to the price of new electronic devices. The bill also establishes an Advisory Council of stakeholders to advise MDE on implementation and other aspects of the program.

### **The problem**

Disposal of electronic devices, including computers, computer monitors, televisions, tablets, cell phones, scanners, and copiers can pose environmental and public health risks. Cathode ray tubes (CRTs), glass tubes, flat screen televisions, and computer monitors contain mercury, lead, and flame-retardant chemicals. Liquid crystal display (LCD) and plasma screens contain lead, cadmium, chromium, antimony, beryllium, and brominated flame retardants. Disposal of these and other electronic devices also wastes resources, as many contain valuable materials, like copper, gold, and aluminum that could be reused. Reusing these recovered electronic components reduces the need for virgin materials in new products, and their associated greenhouse gas emissions.

### **Maryland’s existing electronics recycling program**

Maryland has had an electronics recycling program since 2005, but the funding for the program as originally designed – based entirely on registration fees paid by manufacturers – has not been sufficient to reimburse local governments for the cost of collection and recycling. Since 2008, the program has been able to reimburse local governments for only four years, and the amount of the reimbursement in those years was inadequate to cover their costs. Around 2014, adverse market conditions led many local governments to stop accepting TVs and computer monitors in their electronics recycling programs because they are among the most expensive to recycle. Between 2013 and 2021, residential electronics recycling in Maryland fell by more than half, from 19.2 million pounds to 7.8 million pounds.<sup>1</sup> As a result, many more electronic devices are being landfilled.

According to county recycling websites, as of February 2024 only seven counties<sup>2</sup> and Baltimore City provided year-round collection of all electronic devices, including TVs and monitors, with no drop-off charge. Even in those jurisdictions, there was no convenience standard set for public access to electronics recycling in the existing program: Three of the eight provided electronics recycling at only a single site countywide.

### **Updating the program**

SB591 aims to update the electronic device recycling system to ensure the financial sustainability and effectiveness over the long term. In the process, the bill will improve public access to electronics

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<sup>1</sup> Maryland Solid Waste Management and Diversion Annual Reports, 2014-2022.

<sup>2</sup> Baltimore, Calvert, Charles, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George’s, and Somerset counties. Frederick and Washington counties provide the same services but charge a drop-off fee. Howard, Montgomery, and Prince George’s counties have only a single drop-off site. See Exhibit 1.

Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America’s oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.

recycling and reduce the environmental impacts of discarded electronic devices. There are several commendable features of this bill that are well-positioned to achieve these objectives:

- It puts in place a sustainable source of financing linked to the program's costs. Manufacturers will pay a registration fee to MDE that is pegged to the actual costs of administering the program, among other factors. Consumers will pay for the costs of collecting and recycling the products they purchase in the form of an assessment added to the purchase price of the electronic device, again pegged to the actual cost of collecting and recycling the items. Those revenues are then distributed to the authorized electronics recyclers and collectors. The program's funds are held in a separate account to be used only for the program.
- The program is administered by MDE, but the Department may also administer it through a contractor.
- The program will expand access to electronic device recycling. It authorizes MDE and the Advisory Council to evaluate the current accessibility of recycling drop-off sites for electronic devices and to develop a convenience standard across the state.
- The program launch has been accelerated by one year, to minimize the continued detrimental impacts of landfilling and other disposal of electronic devices due to inadequate finance. The collection of fees would be launched in 2027, and disbursements to collectors and recyclers in 2028.
- Diverse views are solicited from the Advisory Council. The Advisory Council is charged with making recommendations on a long list of important program issues. It is not required to issue consensus recommendations; the process for reporting recommendations will provide MDE with diverse views from the various constituencies on the Advisory Council.

The Sierra Club enthusiastically endorses these improvements introduced by SB 591, which will provide adequate and sustainable financing for the electronic devices recycling program, increase access of the public to recycling services, and improve program effectiveness.

The Maryland Sierra Club commends the bill sponsor and the Maryland Recycling Network for their initiative on this bill and respectfully requests a favorable report on SB591.

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Attachment: Exhibit 1: County Recycling of Electronic Devices, 2024

## Exhibit 1: County Recycling of Electronic Devices, 2024

County	Collected?	Fee?	Frequency?	Notes
Allegany	No	N/A	N/A	Provided by Penn-Marr Recycling company, w/a fee for some products, M-F, 8-4
Anne Arundel	Yes	No	M-F, 7:30am - 4pm	Drop off at three recycling centers
Baltimore City	Yes	No	M-Sat, various hours	Five Citizen's Convenience drop-off centers, six days/week 9am-5pm (3), 7:00am-3:30pm, 7am-5pm
Baltimore County	Yes	No	Mon-Sat, 7:30 am-3:30 pm	Three drop-off centers
Calvert	Yes	No	Mon-Sat, Sun	Six Convenience Centers & landfill, all open Mon-Sat, a few on Sun.
Caroline	No*	N/A	N/A	*Electronics Recycling Day, twice annually, rotates across four counties. (Same county once every two years.)
Carroll	Yes	No	M-F, 7am-4:30pm, Sat 7am-3 pm	Northern Landfill recycling center. Some devices are accepted. However, computer monitors, TVs, and software are treated as trash.
Cecil	Yes	No	Mon-Sat, 7:30 – 3:30	Accepted for recycling at Central Landfill. TVs and monitors not accepted, trashed for fee.
Charles	Yes	No	Mon-Sat	At four recycling centers; Mon-Sat, 7:30 – 5 pm (2 centers); M,W,Sat, 9am-5pm (2 centers)
Dorchester	No	N/A	N/A	
Frederick	Yes	Yes	Mon-Sat, 7am – 4:30 pm	At Citizens' Convenience Center, flat rate of \$8 per visit, or by weight at landfill.
Garrett	Yes	No	M,W,F, 7am-6pm; Sat 9-6; Sun 12-6	Six locations. TVs and CRT monitors not accepted.
Harford	Yes	No		May be only one drop-off; website unclear. CRTs, TVs, CRT monitors are not accepted; disposed of as trash, for a fee.
Howard	Yes	No	Mon-Sat 8-4	Collected at Alpha Ridge Landfill drop-off
Kent	No*	N/A	N/A	*Electronics Recycling Day, twice annually, rotates across four counties. (Same county once every two years.) Free.
Montgomery	Yes	No	Mon-Sat, 9 am-5 pm	Drop off at Shady Grove Transfer Station
Prince George's	Yes	No	Thurs-Sat, 8 am-3:30 pm	Only at drop-off site at the Brown Station Road Landfill
Queen Anne's	No*	N/A	N/A	*Electronics Recycling Day, twice annually, rotates across four counties. (Same county once every two years.) Free
St. Mary's	Yes	Yes	7 days/week	Six convenience centers. Console TVs & projection TVs not accepted.
Somerset	Yes	No	M-F, 7:30am -	Drop off at two Public Works sites, M-F, and

County	Collected?	Fee?	Frequency?	Notes
			3pm	once/month Saturdays, 8am – 2 pm.
Talbot	No*	N/A		*Electronics Recycling Day, twice annually, rotates across four counties. (Same county once every two years.) Free
Washington	Yes	Yes	Thurs – Sat, 7:30am – 3:30 pm	At Forty West Landfill, amount of electronics fee not mentioned on website
Wicomico	Yes	No	Daily 6am-6pm	At Newland Park Landfill convenience center. Excludes TVs and computer monitors
Worcester	No*	N/A		*Once yearly household hazardous waste collection accepts computers & laptops, but not TVs.

\*No – indicates available once/year or less frequently

Source: County websites, accessed February 17, 2024.