



NATIONAL AQUARIUM®

Date: January 29, 2025

Bill: HB 42 – Solid Waste Disposal Surcharge and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Fund and Grant Programs

Position: Support

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Committee:

The National Aquarium respectfully requests a favorable report for HB 42, which would establish a \$2/ton surcharge on the final disposal of solid waste to provide for implementation of programs and projects that prevent food waste, increase food rescue, and support organics recycling and compost.

The National Aquarium is a nonprofit organization that connects people with nature to inspire conservation action, through a holistic, solutions-focused approach, which includes translating ocean and climate science, building resilience through community empowerment, implementing nature-based solutions, and reducing our own carbon footprint. Our work is guided by three overarching goals to combat climate change, stop plastic pollution, and save wildlife and habitats. Environmental responsibility is core to our daily operations; we regularly evaluate how we're doing and challenge ourselves to keep improving. Since 2017 the National Aquarium has eliminated all single-use plastic foodware in our building, replacing disposable plastic products with reusable, compostable or more sustainable options. The Aquarium has for years implemented efforts towards reduced waste overall, including through composting food scraps from our cafes and catered events.

Food waste and other organic matter sent to incinerators and landfills are significant contributors of greenhouse gas emissions. Maryland needs to invest in capacity for management of organic waste in a way that meets our necessary and ambitious climate goals, and this legislation is a proven approach to funding waste management. A nominal charge per ton of waste will incentivize organics diversion while supporting food rescue, on-farm and community composting programs, and local business development with associated green jobs. The self-financing mechanism will also result in less pollution for all Marylanders.

We urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 42.

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