

Committee: Environment and Transportation

Testimony on: HB 858 “Environment – Office of Recycling – Mattress Stewardship Program – Establishment”

Position: Support

Hearing Date: March 5, 2025

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club strongly supports HB 858. This bill would create a Maryland Mattress Stewardship Program in which the manufacturers of mattresses and box springs sold in the state would take responsibility for the collection, processing, renovation, recycling, and ultimate disposal of all used mattresses, in conformance with a plan submitted to the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) by July 1, 2027. The organization representing mattress manufacturers would be required to implement the program within a year after MDE approval of the plan. The program would be funded by an assessment added to the price of mattresses paid at the time of purchase that can only be used to finance the stewardship program. The bill would also ban the landfilling and incineration of mattresses and box springs as of January 1, 2031.

An estimated 15-20 million mattresses are discarded annually in the United States, or more than 50,000 per day.¹ They are discarded by households, hotels, dormitories, hospitals, prisons, and other institutions. These bulky and springy large items cannot be compressed and result in inefficient use of costly landfill space. The use of incineration as a disposal method results in air pollution and contributes to climate change. An unknown number are illegally dumped in the environment. In most states, including Maryland, the costs of disposal and cleanup of dumped mattresses are borne by local government and financed by taxpayers. As of early 2025, only 5 percent of discarded mattresses were actually recycled.²

The disposal of so many used mattresses is not only costly to taxpayers, it is also a waste of valuable resources. More than 75 percent of a mattress can be recycled when it is broken down into its components.³ Steel springs are a recyclable metal resource. Foam can be recovered and made into carpet padding. Wood can be broken up and made into mulch or animal bedding. Cotton and other fabric fibers can be made into insulation or industrial filters. The process is labor-intensive, so increased mattress recycling creates jobs.

Under this program, all manufacturers selling mattresses in Maryland individually or through another entity must participate in a stewardship plan in which they take responsibility for the end-of-life management of used mattresses. The program’s objectives, goals, operations, management, budget, calculation of the assessment, and other details would be elaborated in a Plan that must be approved by MDE. Additional public accountability is provided by independent audits and annual reports. The Plan must be reevaluated by the Department every five years, which provides an opportunity to update and improve the program.

Successful mattress stewardship programs are already operational in Connecticut (since 2015), California (2016), and Rhode Island (2016) and Oregon (2025). These programs provide a dramatic increase in availability and convenience of drop-off and collection sites, as well as public education and engagement with local mattress recycling and repurposing businesses.

¹Mattress Recycling Council (MRC) website, accessed 2/27/2025, <https://mattressrecyclingcouncil.org>

²TheRoundup.org (<https://theroundup.org/mattress-industry-statistics/>), accessed March 1, 2025.

³MRC website, *op. cit.*

Collectively, the programs in these states have recycled more than 15 million mattresses since their inception, saving 14.9 million cubic yards of landfill space and recovering over 500 million pounds of material for use in new items.⁴ The 2023 annual reports for these programs, run by the nonprofit Mattress Recycling Council in each state, report a mattress recycling rate of 68% in Rhode Island, 76.9% in California, and 68% in Connecticut. The programs have reduced the responsibilities of local government and their financial burden for disposal, conserved landfill space, and reduced incineration.

HB 858 acts on one of the recommendations of Maryland's 2014 Zero Waste Plan to establish extended producer responsibility programs for mattresses and other difficult-to-manage materials.⁵ A well-run Maryland Stewardship Program would potentially divert 70-85% of mattresses from landfills and incinerators by increasing recycling and convenience to customers, while creating new jobs and saving local governments and taxpayers the cost of end-of-life management of used mattresses. We respectfully request a favorable report on HB 858.

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⁴MRC website, *op. cit.*

⁵ Maryland Department of the Environment. 2014. *Zero Waste Maryland*, Recommendation 4.3, p. 3: 'Establish EPR programs for mattresses and other difficult-to-manage materials.'