
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF BILL HB 92 WITH AMENDMENTS
Environment - Plastic Rings - Restriction Sale
Environment and Transportation
February 4, 2026

Social Work Advocates for Social Change strongly supports HB 92 with sponsor amendments, which prohibits the sale or distribution of beverage containers connected with plastic ring carriers. HB 92 will help reduce plastic pollution, protect Maryland's waterways, and shift responsibility away from consumers and toward the companies and practices that create plastic waste. While HB 92 is a meaningful step toward reducing preventable plastic waste, we support the sponsor amendment to strengthen the bill and offer one additional implementation-focused amendment to clarify that the prohibition on selling or distributing plastic ring carriers applies to manufacturers and distributors.

Plastic ring carriers contribute to pollution in rivers, streams, and the Chesapeake Bay. Wildlife become entangled in these rings or ingest small fragments, causing injury or death. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reports that plastic packaging – and specifically ring carriers – are a major source of marine debris across the United States.¹ By banning plastic ring carriers statewide, HB 92 removes a known source of harm in Maryland's fragile waterways.

Many materials marketed as biodegradable do not fully break down and instead fragment into microplastics. These particles persist in water, soil, and wildlife for decades. The United Nations Environment Programme has found that many so-called biodegradable plastics still produce microplastics as they degrade.² **For this reason, SWASC fully supports the sponsor's amendment removing the biodegradable exception, which closes a major loophole and ensures that no form of plastic ring carrier – regardless of labeling – remains in circulation in Maryland.**

Removing the biodegradable exemption ensures the bill aligns with Maryland's real waste infrastructure and avoids creating new disposal challenges. Maryland's current recycling and composting systems cannot process many specialty biodegradable plastics. Some alternatives require industrial composting facilities that do not exist statewide. The Maryland Department of the Environment notes that Maryland lacks the facilities needed to break down many of these materials.³

To support smooth implementation and avoid unintended impacts on small retailers, we recommend clarifying that the prohibition on selling or distributing plastic ring carriers applies primarily to manufacturers and distributors. These entities control packaging decisions and are best positioned to ensure compliance with the law. This clarification does not expand the scope of HB 92, aligns with industry practice, and



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complements the sponsor amendments by strengthening enforcement and fairness.

Social Work Advocates for Social Change urges a favorable report on HB 92, including the sponsor amendments and the recommended clarification regarding responsible parties.

Social Work Advocates for Social Change is a coalition of MSW students at the University of Maryland School of Social Work that seeks to promote equity and justice through public policy, and to engage the communities impacted by public policy in the policymaking process.

¹ National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. (2023). Marine debris program: Plastic pollution and packaging waste. U.S. Department of Commerce. <https://marinedebris.noaa.gov>

² United Nations Environment Programme. (2021). From pollution to solution: A global assessment of marine litter and plastic pollution. <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/pollution-solution-global-assessment> marine-litter-and-plastic-pollution

³ Maryland Department of the Environment. (2023). Maryland's zero waste implementation plan: Waste reduction and recycling infrastructure assessment.

<https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/LAND/RecyclingandOperatOnsprogram/Pages/index.aspx>