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**House Bill 296**

**To:** Members of the House Economic Matters and Environmental and Transportation Committee

**From:** Nicholas Blendy, Deputy Director of Government Relations

**Re:** HOUSE BILL 296 – Environment – Single-Use Plastic Straws – Use in a Food Service Business

Chairman Davis, Chairman Barve, Vice-Chair Dumais, Vice-Chair Stein and Members of the Committees, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration **supports** House Bill 296.

House Bill 296 would prohibit, beginning January 1, 2021, a food service business from providing a single-use plastic straw to a customer dining in the food service business unless the customer requests a straw. It does not apply to restaurant services provided at a drive-through window.

Baltimore City, like many other Maryland jurisdictions, struggles with the problem of litter in its streets and waterways. The increase of plastic debris in the world's oceans is a growing crisis. Requiring individuals to request single-use items such as straws, gives them the opportunity to think about their use of plastic materials that have the potential to harm the environment. By reducing the use of plastic straws, this legislation would benefit the goal of waste reduction.

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If Maryland adopts this legislation, it would join many jurisdictions throughout the United States and internationally that have adopted or proposed bans and restrictions on single-use plastic straws and other materials. Several food service companies and restaurants have also announced that they are phasing out or banning the use of single-use straws.

Any effort in source reduction practices such as removal of single-use plastic materials and the need for subsequent responsible disposal of these items is a big step in the right direction. Restricting the use of plastic straws is one factor as it will take multiple approaches, including relentless education and individual responsibility, to resolve the challenges of litter and unnecessary waste.

We respectfully request a **favorable** report on House Bill 296.