

Date: February 19, 2020

Bill: HB 296, Environment – Single-Use Plastic Straws – Use in Food Service Business

Position: Support with amendments

---

Dear Chairman Davis and Members of the Committee:

The National Aquarium respectfully requests a favorable with amendments report for **House Bill 296, Environment – Single-Use Plastic Straws – Use in Food Service Business**, which will reduce the harmful impacts of plastic straws in the environment while promoting increased public education and positive behavior change.

As amended, this bill would eliminate single-use plastic straws commonly distributed at restaurants, while also requiring the businesses to keep a small number on hand for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

The National Aquarium welcomes 1.3 million people a year and is committed to raising public awareness of the negative impact plastic pollution has on the health of people, wildlife and ecosystems. We have seen the serious impact plastic pollution is having on wildlife—especially aquatic species—worldwide. Plastics, including straws, are a hazard for wildlife and the habitats they depend on for survival. While these plastics break down into smaller pieces, they never completely disappear from the environment.



Caption: 2,570 straws picked up by National Aquarium volunteers in 2 hours at Fort McHenry in Baltimore, MD.

An estimated 8 million metric tons of plastic enters the ocean each year; that is equivalent to at least one dump truck full of plastic entering the ocean every minute. If current practices continue, plastic in the ocean could outweigh fish by 2050. The best solution is to reduce the use of disposable plastic. In 2017 the National Aquarium eliminated all single-use plastic foodware from our building, and replaced these disposable plastic products with reusable, compostable or more sustainable recycling options.

Additionally, the National Aquarium has led cleanup events across the state of Maryland for over twenty years. Since 2011, **National Aquarium volunteers have picked up nearly 25,000 straws during cleanups**. During the International Coastal Cleanup last year, over 4,300 straws were removed from Maryland's shoreline.

By passing HB 296, Maryland will reduce the amount of harmful plastic entering waterways and littering communities. **We urge the Committee to issue a favorable with amendments report on HB 296.**

Contact:

**Ryan Fredriksson**

Director, Government Affairs

410-385-8276

[rfredriksson@aquarium.org](mailto:rfredriksson@aquarium.org)