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Committee: Economic Matters

Testimony on: HB 354 – “Solid Waste Management - Personal Cleansing Products Provided at Lodging Establishments – Prohibition”

Position: Support

Hearing Date: February 19, 2020

The Maryland Sierra Club supports HB 354, a bill that would address one important aspect of the growing crisis of plastic waste.

Specifically, the bill would prohibit certain types of lodging establishments (like hotels and motels) from providing personal cleansing products to their guests or to members of the public in plastic bottles which contain less than six ounces and are intended to be non-reusable, except if specifically requested by a guest and the bottle is provided at no cost to the guest. The prohibition would be phased in over a several year period. These lodging establishments still would be able to provide cleansing products in bulk form in their rooms.

The first thing that comes to mind when many people think of “single-use” plastics are products such as straws, carry-out food containers, and plastic bags. But many other kinds of packaging also are problematic, including single-use personal cleansing products offered at lodging establishments. Not only is their single-use aspect troubling but, when recycled, they often are not captured in single-stream recycling facilities because of their small size. The increasingly dire problem of plastic pollution is prompting governments around the world to take action. One state has banned single-use toiletries from lodgings within its borders, and others are considering this as well.

Phasing out those small toiletry products found in hotel rooms is not new to the hospitality industry, and some have already done so on their own by installing wall-mounted, refillable containers.¹ Marriott International expects to save an average of 250 pounds of plastic annually for a 140-room hotel, or about 23,000 plastic bottles that will not be landfilled, incinerated or littered.²

This bill does not ban single-use toiletries outright but discourages their use by discontinuing the practice of lodging establishments providing them automatically. We urge a favorable report on this bill, and hope that the hospitality industry will continue to implement policies on its own that further minimize the utilization of single-use plastic packaging.

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¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/04/travel/plastic-bottles-hotels.html>.

² <https://www.cnn.com/travel/article/shampoo-plastic-bottles-ban-trnd/index.html>.

Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America’s oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has approximately 800,000 members.