



**HB36 – Environment – Packaging, Containers, and Paper
Products – Producer Responsibility
Testimony before House Environment & Transportation
February 9, 2021
Position: Favorable with Amendments**

Mr. Chair, Mr. Vice Chair and members of the committee, my name is Richard Deutschmann, and I represent the 700+ members of Indivisible Howard County. We are providing written testimony today in ***support of HB36***, to incentivize the plastics industry to be more a responsible global citizen. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members).



Our planetary home is in crisis. A crisis that is literally getting us buried in throwaway plastic. According to research by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, by 2050 the ocean will contain more plastic by weight than fish. Scientists at Ghent University in Belgium recently calculated people who eat seafood ingest up to 11,000 tiny pieces of plastic every year. Recycling of single-use plastic is technologically limited and impractical, resulting in less than 10% rate of recycling. The plastic that does end up in our oceans persists for 100's of years, and kills an incalculable amount of marine animals each year. Despite all of this, ***the fossil fuel industry has responded with misinformation and aggressive growth goals, aiming to actually increase the amount of throwaway plastic that consumers use each year.***

This legislation is needed to incentivize producers to use materials and products that are more readily recyclable or compostable and disincentivize them from using materials and creating products that are hard to impossible to recycle. Shifting or expanding the responsibility to producers (Extended Producer Responsibility - EPR) for post-consumer waste lessens the costly burden on taxpayers and municipalities which are left to unfairly manage this massive waste issue.

Meanwhile, the producers of all of this waste have little to no incentives to make their packaging more sustainable because the disposal and environmental costs are incurred by local municipalities and taxpayers and not by the producers. Implementing a cost sharing model, shifts the costs from municipalities to producers and drives producers to reduce waste and meet recyclability standards and environmental design criteria.

EPR programs have been in place for decades and proven to be successful. In Europe, where EPR programs have been implemented, many countries have post-consumer products and packaging recycling rates above 70% or 80%.

HB 36 requires producers of products to submit a product stewardship plan to the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) and requires the stewardship plan to develop and achieve certain criteria, such as performance goals, financing methods, implementation plan, and public outreach and education.

This legislation establishes which producers and types of products are covered under this requirement. In the U.S., there are well over a hundred EPR policies already in place targeting many types of products such as electronics, paint, mattresses, carpet, fluorescent lighting and pharmaceuticals. **Bottles are included in this bill, but we join with some of our allies in requesting an amendment to remove bottles as a product covered by this bill. Bottles will have better recycling rates if they are recycled through a bottle deposit program.**

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) is a critical policy mechanism to help advance a zero waste future and a circular economy. For these reasons, we urge you to support HB 36 with an amendment to remove bottles from this bill.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

We strongly urge a favorable report with this amendment.

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