



Date: February 9, 2021

Bill: HB36 - Environment - Packaging, Containers, and Paper Products - Producer Responsibility

Position: Support

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Dear Chairman Barve and Members of the Committee:

The National Aquarium respectfully requests your support for **House Bill 36- Environment - Packaging, Containers, and Paper Products - Producer Responsibility**, which would advance Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) of packaging and paper products - increasing efficiency of waste management throughout the state while reducing pollution and taxpayer costs.

The National Aquarium believes that plastic pollution is an issue we can stop in our lifetime. This bill is one critically important step in making that a reality. The plastic pollution crisis is well-documented, and updated estimates indicate that globally, about 20 million metric tons of plastic enters aquatic ecosystems each year - or about 11% of all plastic waste generated<sup>1</sup>. That is the equivalent of more than two dump trucks full of plastic emitted to the ocean every minute. Plastic breaks down into smaller pieces, particles which endanger wildlife and contaminate the global food web. Furthermore, marine plastic pollution costs the U.S. approximately \$2 trillion annually<sup>2</sup>. This is due in large part because the costs of waste management are borne primarily by municipalities and taxpayers.

In short, current waste management to address plastic pollution is unsustainable and requires comprehensive systemic change to stop plastic pollution at its source; change behaviors; clean up existing pollution; and provide education and outreach. Establishing an EPR for packaging is a key part of a comprehensive solution. This bill would incentivize packaging producers to meet shared standards for recyclability, and to improve the design of their products with materials that are more reusable, recyclable or compostable. EPR for packaging will support market behavior change, requiring that packaging producers share responsibility and materially contribute to the rising costs of managing waste created by the products they put on the market.

EPR policies are not new; the approach exists for other products from batteries to mattresses. EPR for packaging has been implemented in Canada as well as most European countries and throughout much of Asia. EPR for packaging is also currently being proposed in New York, California, and Vermont. Many relevant businesses are already subject to EPR packaging policies in other countries where they operate. By passing this bill, Maryland has the opportunity to enact comprehensive systemic change to reduce the harmful impacts plastic pollution has on our wildlife and ecosystems while reducing the burden placed on taxpayers.

**We urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB36.**

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<sup>1</sup> Borrelle, S.B. et al. (2020) Predicted growth in plastic waste exceeds efforts to mitigate plastic pollution. *Science*, 369:1515.

<sup>2</sup> Forrest, A. et al. (2019). Eliminating Plastic Pollution: How a Voluntary Contribution From Industry Will Drive the Circular Plastics Economy. *Frontiers in Marine Science*, 6:627.