

Date: February 2, 2022

Bill: HB 135, Environment – Single-Use Plastic– Restrictions

Position: Favorable

Dear Chairman Davis and Members of the Committee:

The National Aquarium respectfully requests a favorable report for **House Bill 135, Environment – Single-Use Plastic– Restrictions**, which will increase public awareness of plastic pollution and help reduce the harmful impact single-use plastic products have on the environment, while potentially saving businesses money by providing fewer single-use items.

The plastic pollution crisis is well-documented. Globally, more than 8 million metric tons (MMT) of plastic enters aquatic ecosystems each year – the equivalent of more than a dump truck full of plastic emitted to the ocean every minute. At our current pace, experts estimate the amount of plastics discharged to the ocean by 2030 will increase to about 53 MMT of plastics – the equivalent of 6 dump trucks per minute; or about half of the total weight of annual global marine fish catch¹. Plastic breaks down into smaller pieces, particles which endanger wildlife and contaminate the global food web. Plastic ingestion or entanglement has been documented in more than 900 species of wildlife.

The best solution is to reduce the use of disposable plastic. In 2017, the National Aquarium removed all single-use plastic foodware from our cafes, instead offering reusable, compostable or more sustainable recycling options. Additionally, the National Aquarium has led cleanup events across the state of Maryland for over twenty years. During the 2019 International Coastal Cleanup alone, volunteers picked up a total of 80,727 pieces of plastic debris along Maryland shorelines, including 604 utensils, 1,168 lids, and 4,309 straws/stirrers.



Caption: Straws picked up by National Aquarium volunteers at Fort McHenry in Baltimore, MD.

Stopping plastic pollution is one of the National Aquarium’s three strategic conservation goals. We take seriously our responsibility to educate our visitors and the surrounding community about the negative impact plastic pollution has on the health of people, wildlife and ecosystems. HB 135 is a step in the right direction. **We urge the Committee to vote in favor of House Bill 135.**

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¹ The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2021. *Reckoning with the U.S. Role in Global Ocean Plastic Waste*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/26132>.