



House Appropriations Committee
House Bill 1182 - University of Maryland, College Park Campus -
Plastics Innovation Competition
March 14, 2023
Urging an Unfavorable Report

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang and Members of the Committee:

The University of Maryland, College Park campus opposes House Bill 1182. This bill requires the University of Maryland, College Park Campus (UMCP) to establish and administer procedures and rules for a plastics innovation competition to create a biodegradable bag, bottle, and straw – and to hold the competition. UMCP must allocate \$3.0 million for the competition: awarding \$1.0 million for the winner in each of three specified categories (biodegradable bag, bottle, and straw), which does not include the costs to hold the competition.

As stated in the fiscal note, “General fund expenditures for UMCP are not assumed to increase to backfill for the higher education expenditures. In addition to the \$3.0 million in prize money, UMCP advises that implementing the competition as specified likely necessitates an additional \$105,000 in expenditures for related staffing and operating costs such as advertising, travel, supplies, and rental space for the competition. Additional administrative work necessitated by the competition includes (1) convening a committee of UMCP faculty/staff and industry experts to develop contest rules; (2) pre-contest communications in social and print media; (3) preliminary screening and qualifying of competitors conducted by a panel of expert judges with support from UMCP staff; and (4) handling the competition itself, which entails providing conference areas, lab space, travel, accommodations, catering, advertising, and staff support.”

While we have researchers and students who are working on sustainability research, including plastics innovation, these projects are chosen and led by faculty and students who have the academic freedom to pursue the research areas of their choice. The bill is vague and unclear about who can participate in the competition, as well as on the timing and criteria. We appreciate the focus on sustainability and innovation, however HB1182 is an impractical idea that would be difficult, if not impossible, to implement and amounts to a large **multi-million dollar unfunded mandate**.

The University of Maryland urges an unfavorable report on HB1182.