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Testimony in SUPPORT of House Bill 841 – Environment – Plastic Bottle Waste Reduction – Water Bottle Filling Stations and Reporting

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
March 26, 2024

Dear Chair Feldman and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT OF HB841**, on behalf of Arundel Rivers Federation. Arundel Rivers is a non-profit organization dedicated to the protection, preservation, and restoration of the South, West and Rhode Rivers with over 3,500 supporters. Our mission is to work with local communities to achieve clean, fishable, and swimmable waterways for present and future generations.

House Bill 841 will require a combined water bottle filling station and drinking fountain to be installed in all new construction for which a drinking fountain is required. This will modernize Maryland in the effort to reduce plastic waste and improve public health. This effort is not the first of its kind as similar legislation has been introduced or is already implemented in Arkansas, California, Hawaii, Illinois, Kentucky, Maine, New Hampshire, Ohio, Rhode Island, and West Virginia. This bill will encourage more people to use reusable water bottles instead of adding plastic to landfills.

This is a necessary step in bringing our state closer to addressing the growing plastic waste problem. According to the EPA, plastics are a rapidly growing segment of municipal solid waste. Particularly, plastic containers and packaging accounted for over 14.5 million tons in 2018. Unfortunately, the Association of Plastic Recyclers measured that only about 8.7% of plastic is being recycled.¹

Arundel Rivers frequently hosts volunteer clean-up efforts around our local waterways and communities, and we are supportive of any effort that will result in less plastic and microplastic from entering our local environment.

HB841 is a critical step towards a more sustainable, cleaner, and healthier future for Maryland and we respectfully request a **FAVORABLE REPORT on HB168**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elle Bassett".

Elle Bassett
South, West and Rhode Riverkeeper
Arundel Rivers Federation

¹ Environmental Protection Agency. Plastics: Material – Specific Data. <https://www.epa.gov/facts-and-figures-about-materials-waste-and-recycling/plastics-material-specific-data>