



Maryland Chapter
P.O. Box 278
Riverdale, MD 20738

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Testimony on: HB 841, Environment – Plastic Bottle Waste Reduction – Water Bottle Filling Stations and Reporting
Position: Support
Hearing Date: March 26, 2024

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club supports HB 841, a bill that would require, in certain new construction, installation of bottle refill stations where water fountains are already required by plumbing codes or local law or regulations. In addition, it requires that the Maryland Department of the Environment conduct a survey of all state agencies and state institutions of higher learning to determine the quantity and volume of plastic water bottles purchased during the 2024 calendar year and to identify alternative methods of providing drinking water.

Single-use plastic water bottles are made from fossil fuels; greenhouse gases are emitted at every stage of their life cycle, from extraction of natural gas, through plastic production, and disposal. They are also frequently littered: Plastic bottles are the third most frequently littered plastic in beach cleanups¹ and constitute about half of the trash by volume collected in trash traps on the Anacostia River.² Littered water bottles that wash into our waterways eventually break into ever smaller pieces of plastic, ingested by marine life, with fatal results. We are learning now that microplastics fill the air we breathe and the water we drink. Scientists have found that human beings may be ingesting up to a credit card's worth of plastic *a week*³.

In addressing the plastic pollution crisis, it makes sense to start with single-use plastic water bottles for which there are excellent alternatives – drinking fountains and water bottle refill stations – and to promote those alternatives in new construction. The bill goes further by setting the stage for reduction of single-use water bottles among State agencies and institutions of higher learning, based on collection of baseline data collected during calendar year 2024. It will help to quantify and ultimately reduce use of single-use plastic water bottles by State agencies.

We respectfully request a favorable report on HB 841.

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¹ 5 Gyres Institute. 2018. "Better Alternatives Now, B.A.N. List 2.0."
<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/6537fd1a80e60f606d49aaff/t/65a8262a6c72c83098032233/1705518639220/BAN+List+2.0.pdf>

² Anacostia Watershed Society.

³ Dahlberg and University of Newcastle, Australia. 2019. *No Plastic in Nature: Assessing Plastic Ingestion from Nature to People*. Commissioned by the World Wildlife Fund.
https://awsassets.panda.org/downloads/plastic_ingestion_press_singles.pdf

Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America's oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.