



Maryland Chapter
P.O. Box 278
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Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Testimony on: SB686 “Environment – Covered Electronic Devices Recycling Program – Establishment”

Position: Support with Amendments

Hearing Date: February 20, 2024

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club supports SB 686, which aims to update Maryland’s existing code to provide increased funding for collection, recycling, refurbishment, and reuse of covered electronic devices. The program would be administered by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), financed through registration fees paid by manufacturers (already in effect) and a new recycling assessment added to the price of new electronic devices. The bill also establishes an Advisory Council of stakeholders to advise MDE on the implementation of the program.

The problem

Disposal of electronic devices, including computers, computer monitors, televisions, tablets, cell phones, scanners, and copiers can pose environmental and public health risks. Cathode ray tubes (CRTs), glass tubes, flat screen televisions, and computer monitors contain mercury, lead, and flame-retardant chemicals. Liquid crystal display (LCD) and plasma screens contain lead, cadmium, chromium, antimony, beryllium, and brominated flame retardants. Disposal of these and other electronic devices also wastes resources, as many contain valuable materials, like copper, gold, and aluminum that could be reused. Reusing these recovered electronic components reduces the need for virgin materials in new products, and their associated greenhouse gas emissions.

Maryland’s existing electronics recycling program

Maryland has had an electronics recycling program since 2005, but the funding for the program as originally designed – based entirely on registration fees paid by manufacturers – has not been sufficient to reimburse local governments for the cost of collection and recycling. Since 2008, the program has been able to reimburse local governments for only four years, and the amount of the reimbursement in those years was inadequate to cover their costs. Around 2014, adverse market conditions led many local governments to stop accepting TVs and computer monitors in their electronics recycling programs because they are among the most expensive to recycle. Between 2013 and 2021, residential electronics recycling in Maryland fell by more than half, from 19.2 million pounds to 7.8 million pounds.¹ As a result, a lot more electronic devices are being landfilled.

According to county recycling websites, as of February 2024 only seven counties² and Baltimore City provide year-round collection of all electronic devices, including TVs and monitors, with no drop-off charge. Even in those jurisdictions, there is no convenience standard set for public access to electronics recycling in the existing program: Three of the eight provide electronics recycling at only a single site countywide.

¹ Maryland Solid Waste Management and Diversion Annual Reports, 2014-2022.

² Baltimore, Calvert, Charles, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George’s, and Somerset counties. Frederick and Washington counties provide the same services but charge a drop-off fee. Howard, Montgomery, and Prince George’s counties have only a single drop-off site. See Exhibit 1.

Updating the program

SB 686 increases the financial resources for the electronics recycling program to reimburse authorized recyclers and collectors of electronic devices. It retains the registration fees paid by manufacturers at existing levels and adds a recycling fee of \$5 or \$10 to the price of covered electronic devices paid by consumers (depending on the device). MDE is given discretion to adjust the consumer recycling fee by regulation. Authorized recyclers and collectors of covered electronic devices for recycling are prohibited from charging drop-off fees. SB 686 also creates an Advisory Council of stakeholders to advise MDE on program implementation. The updated program does not go into effect until 2028, and recyclers and collectors will not benefit from the increased funding until 2029.

The Sierra Club supports these improvements introduced by SB 686, which will increase available funding for electronics recycling and its environmental benefits. However, this bill is also an important opportunity to improve the performance of the program in other ways and ensuring that the new financing mechanisms are adequate to fund the program's needs into the future. For this reason, we encourage the Committee to consider amending the bill along the following lines:

- Within the program's funding from manufacturers' registration fees, require MDE to conduct an evaluation of the convenience and availability of drop-off sites in Maryland for covered electronic devices, make recommendations for increasing access, and estimate the costs of doing so. This would be the basis for developing, in consultation with the Advisory Council, a strategic plan for increasing recycling of covered electronic devices in the state, with targets and adoption of a convenience standard for public access to drop-off sites.
- To ensure that MDE is fully reimbursed for its administration of the program, in lieu of the two-tier flat registration fee for manufacturers, set the fee annually to fully fund the Department's anticipated costs. The registration fee for each manufacturer should reflect the share of electronic devices that each manufacturer sold in the state the previous calendar year and the recyclability of those devices, with a lower fee for greater recyclability.
- To ensure adequate funding for reimbursing recyclers and collectors of covered electronic devices, replace the pre-set \$5 and \$10 charge for the two tiers of covered devices with a fee for each covered device category that reflects the actual costs of collecting and recycling the devices in that category.

Finally, we are concerned that the new funding for electronics recycling provided by the bill would not be available for another five years (2029), during which time a lot of covered electronic devices will be landfilled as waste, with environmental and potential health consequences. We recommend that the Committee move up the timeline by two years, to 2027. This would allow 2 ½ years to launch these changes. The Sierra Club respectfully requests a favorable report on SB 686 and consideration of these strengthening amendments.

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Attachment: Exhibit 1: County Recycling of Electronic Devices, 2024

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.

Exhibit 1: County Recycling of Electronic Devices, 2024

County	Collected?	Fee?	Frequency?	Notes
Allegany	No	N/A	N/A	Provided by Penn-Marr Recycling company, w/a fee for some products, M-F, 8-4
Anne Arundel	Yes	No	M-F, 7:30am - 4pm	Drop off at three recycling centers
Baltimore City	Yes	No	M-Sat, various hours	Five Citizen's Convenience drop-off centers, six days/week 9am-5pm (3), 7:00am-3:30pm, 7am-5pm
Baltimore County	Yes	No	Mon-Sat, 7:30 am-3:30 pm	Three drop-off centers
Calvert	Yes	No	Mon-Sat, Sun	Six Convenience Centers & landfill, all open Mon-Sat, a few on Sun.
Caroline	No*	N/A	N/A	*Electronics Recycling Day, twice annually, rotates across four counties. (Same county once every two years.)
Carroll	Yes	No	M-F, 7am-4:30pm, Sat 7am-3 pm	Northern Landfill recycling center. Som devices. However, computer monitors, TVs, software are trash.
Cecil	Yes	No	Mon-Sat, 7:30 – 3:30	Accepted for recycling at Central Landfill. TVs and monitors not accepted, trashed for fee.
Charles	Yes	No	Mon-Sat	At four recycling centers; Mon-Sat, 7:30 – 5 pm (2 centers); M,W,Sat, 9am-5pm (2 centers)
Dorchester	No	N/A	N/A	
Frederick	Yes	Yes	Mon-Sat, 7am – 4:30 pm	At Citizens' Convenience Center, flat rate of \$8 per visit, or by weight at landfill.
Garrett	Yes	No	M,W,F ,7am-6pm; Sat 9-6; Sun 12-6	Six locations. TVs and CRT monitors not accepted.
Harford	Yes	No		May be only one drop-off; website unclear. CRTs, TVs, CRT monitors are not accepted; disposed of as trash, for a fee.
Howard	Yes	No	Mon-Sat 8-4	Collected at Alpha Ridge Landfill drop-off
Kent	No*	N/A	N/A	*Electronics Recycling Day, twice annually, rotates across four counties. (Same county once every two years.) Free.
Montgomery	Yes	No	Mon-Sat, 9 am-5 pm	Drop off at Shady Grove Transfer Station
Prince George's	Yes	No	Thurs-Sat, 8 am-3:30 pm	Only at drop-off site at the Brown Station Road Landfill
Queen Anne's	No*	N/A	N/A	*Electronics Recycling Day, twice annually, rotates across four counties. (Same county once every two years.) Free
St. Mary's	Yes	Yes	7 days/week	Six convenience centers. Console TVs & projection TVs not accepted.
Somerset	Yes	No	M-F, 7:30am -	Drop off at 2 Public Works sites, M-F, and

County	Collected?	Fee?	Frequency?	Notes
			3pm	once/month Saturdays, 8am – 2 pm.
Talbot	No*	N/A		*Electronics Recycling Day, twice annually, rotates across four counties. (Same county once every two years.) Free
Washington	Yes	Yes	Thurs – Sat, 7:30am – 3:30 pm	At Forty West Landfill, amount of electronics fee not mentioned on website
Wicomico	Yes	No	Daily 6am- 6pm	At Newland Park Landfill convenience center. Excludes TVs and computer monitors
Worcester	No*	N/A		*Once yearly household hazardous waste collection accepts computers & laptops, but not TVs.

*No – indicates available once/year or less frequently

Source: County websites, accessed February 17, 2024.