



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

Committee: Environment and Transportation

Testimony on: HB 1226 “Environment – Office of Recycling – Mattresses and Box Springs”

Position: Support with Amendments

Hearing Date: March 9, 2022

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club strongly supports HB 1226 with amendments. This bill would create a Maryland Mattress Stewardship Program in which the manufacturers of mattresses and box springs sold in the state would take responsibility for the collection, processing, renovation, recycling, and ultimate disposal of all used mattresses, in conformance with a plan approved by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE). The program would be funded by an assessment added to the price of mattresses. The bill would also ban the landfilling and incineration of mattresses and box springs as of January 1, 2027. We are proposing amendments that would increase the coverage, oversight, and environmentally sound management of the program.

An estimated 15-20 million mattresses are discarded annually in the United States, or more than 50,000 per day.¹ They are discarded by households, hotels, dormitories, hospitals, prisons, and other institutions. Calculations from 2011 suggest that fewer than 2 percent were recycled.² These bulky and springy large items cannot be compressed and result in inefficient use of costly landfill space. The use of incineration as a disposal method results in air pollution and contributes to climate change. An unknown number are illegally dumped in the environment. In most states, including Maryland, the costs of disposal and cleanup are borne by local government and financed by taxpayers.

The disposal of so many used mattresses is not only costly to taxpayers, it is also waste of valuable resources. More than 75 percent of a mattress can be recycled.³ Steel springs are a recyclable metal resource. Foam can be recovered and made into carpet padding. Wood can be broken up and made into mulch or animal bedding. Cotton and other fabric fibers can be made into insulation or industrial filters. The process is labor-intensive, so increased mattress recycling creates jobs.

HB 1226 acts on one of the recommendations of Maryland’s 2014 Zero Waste Plan to establish extended producer responsibility (EPR) programs for mattresses and other difficult-to-manage materials.⁴ Under this program, all manufacturers selling mattresses in Maryland individually or through an organization must participate in a stewardship plan in which they take responsibility for the end-of-life management of used mattresses – collection, processing, repurposing, recycling, and ultimate disposal. The program

¹Mattress Recycling Council (MRC) website, accessed 3/4/2022, [.https://mattressrecyclingcouncil.org](https://mattressrecyclingcouncil.org)

²Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE). 2014. *Zero Waste Maryland: Maryland’s Plan to Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle Nearly All Waste Generated in Maryland by 2040*. Footnote 83, p. 48.

³MRC website, *op. cit.*

⁴MDE, *op. cit.*, Recommendation 4.3, p. 3.

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.

would be financed through an assessment on each mattress at the time of purchase that can only be used for the purpose of the program. The program's objectives, goals, operations, management, budget, calculation of the assessment, and other details would be elaborated in a Plan that must be approved by MDE. Additional public accountability is provided by independent audits and annual reports.

Successful mattress stewardship programs are already operational in Connecticut (since 2015), California (2016), and Rhode Island (2016); programs are under consideration in Massachusetts and Oregon. They provide a dramatic increase in availability of drop-off and collection sites, increasing convenience, coupled with public education and engagement with local mattress recycling and repurposing businesses. Collectively, the programs in these states have recycled more than 8 million mattresses since their inception, saving 7,380,000 yards of landfill space and recovering 300 million pounds of material for use in new items.⁵ The 2019 annual reports for these programs, run by the nonprofit Mattress Recycling Council in each state, report a mattress recycling rate of 69% in Rhode Island, 70.5% in California, and 73% in Connecticut. The programs have reduced the responsibilities of local government, reducing their financial burden for disposal.

Maryland has an opportunity to learn from the experience of the mattress stewardship programs in the other three states to improve effectiveness. We have been in discussions with the sponsor in support of several amendments:

- The program should accept all mattresses, regardless of their condition, since an assessment is paid on all mattresses.
- Management must be environmentally sound. The very small percentage of mattresses that cannot be recycled or renovated should be landfilled, not incinerated.
- The program should also aim to reduce illegal dumping of mattresses, which should be tracked over time to measure the success of those efforts.
- The Advisory Board should include a representative from the solid waste industry and its mandate should be extended beyond offering advice in setting up the program, to include reviewing and commenting on all stewardship plans, making recommendations to MDE on the approval of plans, and reviewing and commenting on all annual reports.
- The penalties for noncompliance should be written into the law, not left to the producers or their representative organizations to propose in the Program Plan.

With these amendments and based on experience in other states, a well-run Maryland Stewardship Program would potentially divert 70-85% of mattresses from landfills and incinerators by increasing recycling and convenience to customers, while creating new jobs and saving local governments and taxpayers the cost of end-of-life management of used mattresses. We respectfully request a favorable report on HB 1226.

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⁵MRC website, *op. cit.*