



To: Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

Re: SB 781 - Public and Commercial Buildings, Special Events, and Single-Family Residences

The Maryland Recycling Network promotes sustainable reduction, reuse and recycling (the 3 "R's") of materials otherwise destined for disposal and the purchase of products made with recycled material content. We achieve these goals through education programs, advocacy activities to affect public policy, technical assistance efforts, and the development of markets to purchase recycled materials and manufacture products with recycled content.

Due to State recycling legislation vigorously supported by the MRN and enacted in 2012 (HB 929), counties must meet or exceed 35% or 20% recycling rate minimums by 2015, depending on whether the county's population exceeds 150,000. The same law encourages counties to set even higher recycling rate goals for 2015. All counties must amend their ten-year solid waste management plans to include 2015 recycling mandates/goals no later than July 1, 2014.

MRN believes the State should help fashion broad recycling **policy**, as it did in 2012. However, counties know best **how** to pursue achievement of State policy goals. Each county in Maryland has unique traits (population density, demographics, resources, distance from recycling markets, etc.), which makes State legislation that is flexible regarding implementation much more time-effective and cost-effective than State legislation that is prescriptive regarding implementation. **In particular, requiring (as SB 781 would) yet another round of amendments to ten-year solid waste management plans would counter-productively divert an estimated 4,000 or more recycling staff hours statewide away from actually advancing recycling.**

MRN agrees with the sponsors of SB 781 that the commercial sector and public events provide sound opportunities for advancing recycling. However, each county is best suited to decide how to allocate time and money toward meeting and exceeding the 2015 (and sometimes later as well) recycling rate mandates/goals being added to the counties' ten-year solid waste management plans by the July 1, 2014 deadline.

MRN would like to work with the Senator and her staff to pursue an alternative approach to yet again (for the 5th time in 5 years) requiring counties to amend their ten-year solid waste management plans as the result of well-intentioned, but often counter-productive, State recycling legislation. **We believe there is a better path forward, namely requiring counties to issue detailed and highly public annual reports regarding progress toward, or movement backward, in reference to recycling rate mandates and goals.** In reality, this would facilitate a much more robust discussion about options for recycling progress than typical public hearing processes associated with ten-year solid waste management plans ever do, with far less time and expense.

The Maryland Recycling Network stands ready to serve as a sounding board and resource for legislators and others interested in pursuing our mission. Please do not hesitate to contact me or our Executive Director, Peter Houstle at phoustle@marylandrecyclingnetwork.org, 301-725-2508 or MRN, PO Box 1640, Columbia MD 21044 if you have any questions or would like additional information regarding the above.

We look forward to working with you to continue the strides we have all made to improve Maryland's recycling programs in a time-effective and cost-effective manner.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read 'G. Evans', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Gemma Evans, MRN President
Recycling Coordinator
Howard County Bureau of Environmental Services