



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

March 6, 2024

SB 642

Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) offers this testimony in support of Senate Bill 642. The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

Senate Bill 642 would establish a Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Fund and Litter Reduction Program within the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), administered by the Office of Recycling. The purpose of the program is to increase the reuse and recycling of beverage containers in the State.

This legislation establishes a framework for "producers" and "beverage container stewardship organizations" to develop and implement beverage container stewardship plans. Plans would be submitted to the Maryland Department of the Environment for approval. A grant program would be formulated to support the goals of the program, provisions for redemption facilities, an advisory council, and enforcement provisions.

In his encyclical letter "*Laudato Si'*," Pope Francis reminds us of our sacred duty to safeguard the Earth, our common home, and to preserve its beauty and resources for present and future generations. Beverage container waste in particular poses a significant threat to the integrity of creation, contaminating our oceans, rivers, and landscapes, and endangering the health of wildlife and ecosystems. As custodians of God's creation, we are called to take decisive action to address this ecological crisis and restore harmony to the natural world.

Plastic bottled water consumption in particular continues to contribute to environmental degradation and exacerbate the global water crisis. This legislation would promote a significant reduction in plastic bottle pollution and promote a partnership to reduce the same with those whose business endeavors perpetuate their distribution and use.

The MCC appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 642