



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY COUNCIL

WALA BLEGAY
Council Vice-Chair, District 6

March 5, 2024

Hon. Brian Feldman, Chair
Hon. Cheryl Kagan, Vice-Chair
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Maryland Senate

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and Committee members,

I'm writing to express my strong support for SB 642, the Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program, a.k.a. the Maryland Bottle Bill. About 5.2 billion beverage containers are sold annually in Maryland, but only about a quarter of them are returned for recycling. Four billion containers per year are left in the environment in landfills or as litter or are incinerated. SB 642 will reduce beverage container litter and plastic pollution by diverting empty beverage containers from landfills, incinerators, and the environment, reducing the volume of solid waste generated, relieving taxpayers of a significant financial burden, and improving the quality of life.

The program would add a small deposit to the price of beverage containers, refunded when the container is returned by customers for recycling. By putting a value on empty containers, the public has an incentive not to litter and to retrieve containers that are littered for the refund. The program will provide relief for the County's budget, divert containers from the landfill, reduce roadside litter, and spur recycling statewide. It will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, create new jobs in the recycling industry, and provide high-quality materials that can be recycled into new beverage containers.

Similar programs have been operating for decades in ten states and around the world. A minimum 10-cent deposit like the one proposed in SB 642 would achieve a 90% redemption rate of beverage containers and beverage container litter would be reduced by at least 70-84%. This is especially important for Prince George's County, where litter is one of the main concerns in our community as many of the communities in my District have high amounts of litter and trash across the main roads. The Anacostia and Baltimore Harbor are two of only three water bodies in the country that are impaired for trash and regulated by the EPA under the Clean Water Act.

This program places no responsibility for implementation or enforcement on local government, will reduce waste and recycling costs, and conserve space in the County's landfill, which is in my district. My County would have the option to run its own beverage container redemption center, in return for a per container handling fee. For the first two years of the program, if the County were to realize an increase in net costs of waste management that can be attributable to the Bottle Bill, it would be compensated by the

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program. However, a review of experience in dozens of jurisdictions across the world strongly suggests that local governments will experience cost savings.

I urge you to support SB 642, to reduce plastic pollution and beverage container litter, provide cleaner roads, parks, and waterways, and create savings for county budgets and local taxpayers, and to act with urgency. Every year we wait, another 4 billion beverage containers enter the environment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Wala Blegay", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Wala Blegay, Esq.
Prince George's County Council, District 6

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