



**Oral Testimony of
Christopher E. Williams, President and CEO
Anacostia Watershed Society
to the
Maryland Senate
Education, Energy & the Environment Committee
SB 642, Maryland Beverage Container Recycling
Refund and Litter Reduction Program
March 5, 2024**

Good afternoon. I am testifying today on behalf of the thousands of members, supporters and volunteers of the Anacostia Watershed Society in Prince George's and Montgomery County, Maryland.

Five point two billion single use beverage containers are sold in Maryland every year. That's an average of over 14 million plastic bottles, aluminum cans and glass bottles purchased, used, and disposed of every day. That is a lot of waste that has to go

somewhere. Well, at least that stuff is recyclable, huh? That's a relief.

But, unfortunately, it isn't, because despite curbside pick-up, less than a quarter of all that trash is actually captured for recycling. The rest, 4 billion otherwise recyclable containers, never get into the recycling stream. For those keeping score, that's almost 2 bottles and cans per each of Maryland's 6.2 million residents *per day, every day*, going to rapidly filling, often leaking landfills, to incinerators to be burned into toxic air pollution, or into our neighborhood streets, parks, and rivers.

This plastic trash pollutes public spaces and fouls wildlife habitat, interfering with foraging, feeding, and other behaviors.

Moreover, as the plastic trash decomposes, it breaks down into microplastics that persist in the environment for many years.

Studies on the impact of microplastics and nanoplastics on fish and mussel species have found damaged digestive and reproductive systems, and an increased chance of mortality. And there is increasing and frightening evidence that humans are

ingesting more plastic every day, the damaging health effects of which are only beginning to be understood.

This is an environmental and impending public health crisis that needs to be forcefully addressed without delay. I can assure you that the much discussed, pending Recycling Needs Assessment will not provide a more effective and efficient solution than the type of deposit return/recycle system laid out in SB 642 that has dramatically increased recycling rates in 10 U.S. states and across Europe. We have decades of data to demonstrate that these systems reduce pollution and are remarkably cost effective. AWS strongly supports SB 642 and urges the Committee to favorably report out the bill.

Thank you.