



SB 642 - Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program
Date: March 5, 2024

Position: Support

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee:

We enthusiastically support SB 642. This bill would set up a recycling refund program for beverage containers. We all know the most effective recycling programs in the United States are in the 10 states where consumers can get a refund in exchange for returning their beverage container for recycling. SB 642 will bring this program to Maryland.

The ten states with recycling refund programs supply 50% of our nation's recyclable glass

supply.¹

In states with recycling refunds, the recycling rate for plastic bottles is 67%. States without a recycling refund program recycle 17% of their plastic bottles on average.²

States with recycling refund programs have 50% less litter than other states.³

That's how effective these programs are. This is a tried and true policy that will significantly reduce trash and litter in our streets, neighborhoods and waterways.

By contrast, where we stand now has taxpayers funding significant costs associated with litter. Here are just a few small examples. According to MDOT, the SHA alone spends nearly \$8M annually to remove approximately 5,300 truckloads of litter. According to the agency "that's more than 27,000 truckloads and nearly \$40 million" every 5 years. Maryland local governments each fund litter cleanup programs. Trash Free Maryland knows of 708 cleanups across Maryland conducted by thousands of volunteers annually and this is limited only to those clean-ups publicly recruiting volunteers. There are thousands more conducted by residents in their communities. Perhaps the largest cost is that to our society. Health professionals tell us children who grow up in communities with litter are less likely to have successful outcomes. Litter affects us all.

All of these costs are avoidable! There are better ways and this bill brings one of the most effective ways to reduce litter to Maryland.

We also note recycling refund programs for beverage containers go hand in hand with legislation passed last year initiating the process to adopt producer responsibility for packaging. It is estimated that 40 to 60 percent of packaging is beverage containers.⁴ Producer responsibility programs help us *reduce* our volume of waste. Recycling refund programs help us *reuse* and *recycle* a major portion of the packaging waste stream.

Marylanders take great pride in our recycling efforts and are fed up with trash. A recycling refund program is a proven winner. We look forward to working with you on this exciting and highly effective policy. We respectfully urge your favorable consideration.

Contact: Shari Wilson, Trash Free Maryland (shari@trashfreemaryland.org)

Anacostia Waterkeeper

Arundel Rivers Federation

Audubon Mid-Atlantic

¹ Glass Packaging Institute 2023

² The 50 States of Recycling: A State-by-State Assessment of Containers and Packaging Recycling Rates 2021

³ Keep America Beautiful 2020 National Litter Study <https://kab.org/litter-study>

⁴ National Stewardship Action Council

Blue Water Baltimore

Environment Maryland

Maryland Catholics for our Common Home

Maryland Legislative Coalition Climate Justice Wing

Maryland League of Conservation Voters

Maryland Ornithological Society

Maryland PIRG

National Aquarium

Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Rock Creek Conservancy

Shore Rivers

Trash Free Maryland

Zero Waste Future