



Testimony On: SB 642 Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program
Submitted by: Zero Waste Montgomery County
Committee: Education, Energy, and Environment
Position: Support
Date: March 5, 2024

Honorable Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement for the record. My name is Kelly Doordan and I'm submitting this testimony on behalf of Zero Waste Montgomery County. We strongly SUPPORT S.B. 642 (Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program).

The program would create a beverage container deposit program in Maryland with a 10- or 15-cent refundable deposit on metal, glass, and plastic beverage containers. The deposit is refunded to the customer when the beverage container is returned for recycling. Without this program, billions of containers sold in Maryland are being incinerated, landfilled, or left to pollute Maryland's streets and waterways. Importantly, this program offers Marylanders a self-financing and proven program to reduce beverage container litter and increase recycling of high quality materials. Unclaimed deposits would fund a grant program to increase reuse and further recycling, helping our state move toward zero waste and saving local governments money in water cleanup and trash disposal costs.

We already have years of data from our waste characterizations and recycling reports, along with estimates of numbers of beverage containers sold in the state and how much litter removed from our waterways is from beverage containers. We do not need to wait for another report to tell us what we know is needed now. For example, in Montgomery County, while only 1.2 percent by weight of our non-recycled trash is categorized as PET #1 "bottle bill" plastic bottles, that translated to an estimate of more than 9,100 tons of PET #1 bottles that were disposed rather than separated for curbside recycling in 2023.¹

Trash dumped in waterways is a health hazard for people, wildlife, and fish, and has negative aesthetic and economic impacts. The Anacostia River is so impacted by trash pollution that it was the second waterway in the nation that compelled the U.S. EPA to establish as requiring a

¹ Montgomery County, MD, Department of Environmental Protection, MSW Management System Analysis, *Request for Expressions of Interest, Shady Grove Transfer Station Waste Tonnage and Composition Data*.

Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for trash.² Beverage container litter is currently about half the volume of trash in Anacostia River trash traps,³ meaning efforts to encourage beverage container litter reduction and recycling have not been effective and we need to do more.

This legislation would:

- Enable Marylanders to enjoy the benefits of a program that has measurably reduced beverage container litter in other states.
- Protect our streets and waters from beverage container litter that clogs storm drains, clutters streams, and breaks down into microplastics that pollute our state's waters.
- Implement an evidence-based program to improve recycling rates to as much as 90% backed by decades of experience in more than ten other states.
- Prevent billions more beverage containers from being destroyed in incinerators or landfills or littered to pollute our streets and waters.
- Help Maryland move toward zero waste and circular economy systems where we keep materials circulating in our economy at the highest and best value. Beverage container refund programs provide different incentives and build out different types of infrastructure compared to other recycling programs. The beverage containers collected in deposit/refund systems are cleaner and better suited for remanufacturing or reuse than containers sorted out from trash or single stream recycling systems.

Please pass the Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program this year. Thank you for your consideration.

² <https://www.epa.gov/dc/steps-taken-reduce-trash-anacostia>

³ Anacostia Watershed Society