

February 14, 2025

Testimony in Support of SB346, Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program

Position: Favorable

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

As a community volunteer actively engaged in efforts to reduce waste and protect our waterways, I am greatly saddened by the amount of litter -- so much of it beverage containers -- that I see constantly on my walks in public areas and near waterways.

In volunteering with stream cleanup events, I have been struck by the large amount of beverage containers that we have removed from the water and stream banks.

I am aware of the many negative environmental impacts that all this waste causes. Plastic beverage containers pollute our waterways and pose a threat to wildlife and human health. They break up into small pieces and are ingested by marine life, injuring and killing fish, seabirds, and marine mammals. Scientists estimate that humans are ingesting up to a credit card's worth of plastic weekly.

More than 4 billion containers a year, 2.6 billion of which are plastic, are left in the environment -- in waterways, on roadsides, in landfills -- or are burned in air-pollution-causing incinerators.

Therefore, I strongly support this legislation because of the success of similar programs in other states, and because of the many benefits it will offer for Maryland:

- Reduction in beverage container litter and plastic pollution, and an increase in water quality.
- A dramatic increase in Maryland's beverage container recycling rate. The recycling rate is currently only 25% of the more than 5 billion containers sold in the state each year.
- Reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.
- Savings for taxpayers and local governments.
- Job creation. Recycling generated by a deposit program creates five times as many jobs as landfilling or incineration.

Beverage container deposit programs are a proven, highly effective policy for recovering used beverage containers and reducing waste. Ten states have longstanding, successful programs. Deposit programs also dramatically increase beverage container recycling. The recycling rate for deposit beverage containers is 2-3 times higher than for containers not subject to a deposit, and the benefit is greater with higher deposits.

I strongly urge a favorable vote on SB346 as strong legislation to support environmental sustainability, benefit the health of people and wildlife, and reduce litter.

Please give a favorable vote on SB346.

Sincerely,
Tom Taylor
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