



SENATE BILL 346

Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program

February 18, 2025

Position: Unfavorable

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Education, Energy & Environment Committee:

The Restaurant Association of Maryland opposes SB 346. This legislation would require beverage distributors to include a redeemable beverage container refund value as part of the wholesale price of beverage containers sold to restaurants, bars, and other retailers. The legislation prohibits restaurants, bars and other “on-premises sellers” from including the refund value of redeemable beverage containers in the retail price when sold to customers.

Despite language in the bill that allows on-premises sellers to arrange for pickup of empty redeemable beverage containers (with refunds and materials handling fee paid) by a beverage container stewardship organization or via bag drops, many questions remain about the related logistics for on-premises sellers. Convenient redemption options for on-premises sellers located in less-populated areas of the state could be limited. Moreover, restaurants and bars in locations with limited outside storage space (such as downtown/city areas) or in properties with shared disposal facilities (e.g., shopping centers, malls, sports/entertainment venues, the airport, etc.) would face challenges separately storing their beverage containers for pickup and ensuring that the correct on-premises seller receives the refunds.

In 2023, the General Assembly enacted legislation (SB 222) that requires the Maryland Department of Environment to hire a consultant to conduct a statewide recycling needs assessment. This law also established an advisory council to study and make recommendations for implementing a producer responsibility program for packaging materials. We are still awaiting the release of these reports. We believe it would be prudent for the General Assembly to wait until after the release of these reports before giving serious consideration to any other recycling-related policy.

For these reasons, we oppose SB 346 and request an unfavorable report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melvin R. Thompson" with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Melvin R. Thompson
Senior Vice President
Government Affairs and Public Policy