

Melissa A Schweisguth
Hyattsville, MD 20782

February 14, 2025

Re: FAVORABLE position on SB0346 Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program

Dear Chair Felldman, Vice Chair Kagan and Committee members,

Thank you for your service to the State of Maryland. I am writing to ask that the committee provide a favorable report on SB0346, the Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program, and support its passage in the House and General Assembly.

SB0346 would solve two persistent and widespread problems that have negative environmental and economic impacts: littering and lack of recycling of single use-beverage containers (e.g. plastic water and soda bottles, beer bottles, cans).

I live in District 22, where I have adopted a trail with my local watershed group, lead and carry out trail clean ups, and run and bike across the extensive trail system spanning Prince George's and Montgomery counties. Discarded single-use beverage containers are the most common item collected in every cleanup. They dot the trails, river and streambank, and roads throughout my area and the state, too. Beverage containers are one of the most common litter items in the . The Anacostia Watershed Society's Anacostia River trash traps, which capture litter from my watershed. Plastic bottles are especially concerning as they break into tiny "microplastics" that contaminate the environment and enter our food chain when animals ingest them.

Data indicate that less than one-quarter of beverage containers sold in Maryland are recycled; only about 1.2 billion (23 percent) of the 5.2 billion beverage containers sold in Maryland annually are recycled while 4 billion are wasted—landfilled, littered or incinerated. This results in negative climate and environmental impacts due to continued use of virgin materials, as well as the impacts of incineration (e.g., toxic ash) and landfilling (e.g., methane)

SB0346 solves these problems by creating a refundable deposit system, wherein consumers pay a small deposit (10 or 15 cents) when they purchase beverages, and can get the deposit back when they return containers for recycling. The proposed system includes conveniently located return facilities, a Stewardship Organization representing the container industry, and a Plan that would be approved by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE). MDE would oversee the program and provide enforcement, with input from an Advisory Council.

The proposed deposit system is a proven model: ten states, covering about 90 million people, have well-established deposit programs with high success rates. According to data provided by the Maryland Sierra Club, programs with at least a 10-cent deposit recover up to 90 percent of containers for reuse or recycling, more than triple Maryland's beverage container recycling rate.

The proposed deposit program is cost-effective as it provides an incentive for consumers to maximize recycling and would leverage beverage industry funding to run the program, avoiding increased costs for the government. It would reduce the cost of collecting, recycling, landfilling and incinerating beverage containers, provide high quality recycled materials for container manufacturing, stimulate recycling markets and investments in deposit systems, improve water quality, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions and energy use.

For these reasons, I enthusiastically support SB0346 and ask that the committee return a favorable report and support its passage in the Senate and General Assembly.

Thank you for considering my comments on this important measure.

Sincerely,

Melissa A Schweisguth