

My name is Jon Merryman. I live in Catonsville and as some of you may already know, I'm very active in volunteerism when it comes to "other people's trash." Sometime later this year, I will have picked up over a million pieces of litter and over a million pounds of junk - tossed aside by uncaring individuals and businesses. I've also done roadside and river cleanups in over 550 US counties (which is over 1/6th of the country), including all 206 counties of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. So you could say I literally have plenty of STREET and STREAM cred related to this topic.

I'm that guy who's peering into storm drains, stepping over the guardrails and picking through ditches and gullies, hacking through thorn bushes and poison ivy, and wading into ponds, streams, and rivers to remove anything and everything that doesn't belong there. For areas that I clean regularly, for several years we were making decent progress. Trash from decades ago was getting cleaned up, and annual cleanups were often enough to maintain an area. But sometime around the peak of Covid, something happened. It's especially noticeable in the amount of trash people are tossing from vehicles, often in plain sight of others. Areas I used to clean up annually, or quarterly, are now completely trashed in as little as a month, or in some cases, just one week. Instead of sitting down at a restaurant, they're getting food to go. Instead of shopping at a store, they're shopping online. More truckers and delivery vehicles are on our nation's roads than ever, and the amount of trash this shift has generated has been staggering to me. With not enough time in their schedules, or not enough physical locations to take a break, they're parking randomly on the shoulder where no facilities are available, and our shared environment has become their personal trash can. And their business' repair shop. And their personal toilets. To make things worse, crews assigned to repair the damage they're doing are leaving trash of their own.

After taking all this in while seeing it happen in real time, I've come to some conclusions. While we can't eliminate or even punish bad behavior - because as we know, catching people in the act of littering, or even dumping large loads, is next to impossible -- we can and should do two things: First, minimize the damage done to the environment by changing the contents of the trash we find. We've started doing that. Foam product bans, and plastic bag bans are making a difference. I see it in the results of every trash bag I fill. But secondly, we need to start rewarding Good Behavior, and this is where the Deposit/Refund plan comes in. I've seen the difference it can make in two states where I've done cleanups in all their counties. In New Hampshire, which does NOT have a container deposit, it was relatively easy to fill a garbage bag with bottles and cans I found. But right next door in Vermont, which DOES have a container deposit, it took a LOT longer to fill a trash bag with the occasional wrappers and napkins scattered about.

We are at a crisis now, with studies showing that microplastics have found their way into our brains. But thankfully, this bill is a no-brainer. As other states have shown, it's a proven way to reduce litter, and the secondary and tertiary benefits are too numerous to mention in the limited time I have. Please take the time to also review my written testimony, where I have included several photos that will completely rock your world. And not in a good way. Thanks for listening.

Jon Merryman
jtmerryman@comcast.net
5 Magruder Avenue, Catonsville MD 21228
443-740-3590



Masonville Cove / Unnamed Tributary leading to Captain Trashwheel, Baltimore, Maryland 21226



Liberty Reservoir @ Nicodemus Road, Reisterstown. Maryland 21136



Beckley Street, Fort Holabird Park, Baltimore, Maryland 21224



Colgate Creek, Fort Holabird Park, Baltimore Maryland 21224



Plastic container cleanup @ Colgate Creek, Fort Holabird Park, Baltimore Maryland 21224



Hammonds Ferry Road, Patapsco Valley State Park, Halethorpe, Maryland 21227



I-95 Chesapeake House parking lot, Port Deposit, Maryland 21904



I-95 Maryland Welcome Center (Northbound), Laurel Maryland 20723



Makeshift truck rest area @ I-95/I-495 interchange (Paint Branch), College Park, Maryland 20740



Retention pond behind shopping center, Pocomoke City, Maryland 21851



Carroll Creek, Frederick, Maryland 21702

