



Date: February 18, 2025

Bill: SB 346– Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program

Position: Support

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee:

The National Aquarium respectfully requests a favorable report for SB 346. If enacted, the Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program would increase the reuse and recycling of beverage containers, reduce litter and pollution, and lower waste management costs.

Reducing litter from beverage containers across Maryland is related to all the National Aquarium’s strategic conservation goals: combatting climate change, saving wildlife and habitats, and stopping plastic pollution. Most plastic is made from fossil fuels, and every stage of the plastic use cycle contributes to climate change, air pollution and environmental justice concerns. In Maryland, more than 5 billion single-use beverage containers, more than half of which are plastic, are sold every year¹, yet only about a quarter of these containers are recycled. The rest end up in landfills, are incinerated or become litter in our environment. Over time, plastic containers break down into smaller pieces that endanger wildlife, contaminate the global food web, and transport toxins harmful to human health.

The National Aquarium is committed to holistic, solutions-focused approaches to reducing plastic pollution, which includes implementing various plastic reduction and waste diversion measures throughout our operations. As part of this commitment, the National Aquarium has eliminated all single-use plastics from our cafes, including plastic beverage containers. The National Aquarium has worked with thousands of dedicated volunteers to remove over 35,000 plastic beverage containers from the environment during the last four years alone. As just one of the many organizations in Maryland that conduct regular debris cleanups, this figure only underscores the need for a change in approach that includes passing the Maryland Bottle Bill.

The U.S. remains one of the world’s top generators of new plastic production and plastic waste. The plastic pollution crisis is well-documented around the world, with the global cost of waste management and litter cleanup activities totaling approximately \$47 billion each year². Closer to home, the state funds several grant programs to support litter removal, and the Maryland Department of Transportation estimates spending approximately \$8 million annually to remove truckloads of litter, including beverage containers, from roadways. Marylanders’ time and capacity as well as millions of dollars could be better allocated by reducing how many beverage containers become litter and this legislation offers a proven source reduction policy solution.

Action by the state of Maryland is long overdue. Refundable bottle deposit programs currently operate in ten other U.S. states and have been shown to be highly effective policies that recover beverage containers and increase recycling rates while reducing litter and associated costs of

¹ [Container Recycling Institute](#), Beverage Market Analysis

² [World Wide Fund for Nature 2022. Plastics: the costs to society, the environment and the economy.](#)

mitigation. Enacting a beverage container deposit return system in our state is a critical and cost-effective step towards a cleaner and healthier future for Maryland.

We urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on SB 346.

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