

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment
Testimony on: SB346 – Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program
Submitting: Deborah A. Cohn
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: February 18, 2025

Dear Chair Feldman and Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing my testimony today in strong support of SB346. I have resided in Maryland since 1986, and most of my descendants reside in Maryland. Although I recall bottle deposits in supermarkets from childhood, I first experienced modern bottle deposit programs using reverse vending machines in Munich. They were easy to use and had an important added benefit for low income pensioners who would supplement their income by collecting plastic, metal and glass bottles discarded in parks and littering streets for easy redemption in neighborhood markets. Indeed, such a woman showed me how the process worked (and gave me a great way to practice my meager German and better understand the local culture.)

The Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction, also called the Maryland bottle bill, would be self-funded from fees paid by producers, revenue from the sale of raw materials, unclaimed deposits, and penalties. It would be operated by an industry run non-profit beverage container stewardship organization and is generally based on the extended producer responsibility model that foster a circular and zero waste economy. Thus, the state or local jurisdiction do not pay for operation of the beverage container deposit program but reap the financial benefits of reduced recycling and litter clean-up costs.

Beverage container deposit programs are simple and they work. SB346 would create a beverage container deposit program requiring a 10- or 15-cent refundable deposit, depending on the size of the container. The deposit is refunded to the customer when the bottle is returned. Ten states, covering more than 90 million people, have longstanding, successful programs. Results in those states demonstrate that these type of programs dramatically increase bottle returns, often up to a 90 percent return rate – a significant increase from Maryland’s 25 percent rate today.

SB346 includes three important improvements to prior iterations of a bottle deposit programs. It:

- Explicitly excludes cratons, pouches and aseptic packaging
- Authorizes the grant program for reuse/refill to finance an evaluation of the investments and policies needed to increase the share of reusable containers sold in Maryland by 2035
- Allows the Maryland Department of the Environment to add container types in the future as redemption technology and container materials change.

Beverage container deposit programs create multiple other benefits. They reduce waste by promoting the highest tiers – redesign, reduce, reuse, recycle – of the zero waste pyramid. They continue to build a circular, zero waste economy. They reduce plastic litter in our waterways, thereby reducing creation of

microplastics. And by increasing bottle recycling rates, they encourage businesses to create refillable and reusable containers and for businesses to provide bottle refill water dispensers.

For these reasons I support SB346 and urge a FAVORABLE report in Committee. Thank you.