



Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

February 18, 2025

Senate Bill 346 – *Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program*

POSITION: OPPOSE

The Maryland chapter of the National Waste and Recycling Association (NWRA-MD) is a trade association representing the private solid waste industry in Maryland. Its membership includes hauling and collection companies, processing and recycling facilities, transfer stations, and disposal facilities. NWRA-MD and its members oppose Senate Bill 346.

Senate Bill 346 proposes to establish a statewide beverage container recycling refund and litter reduction program. While we appreciate the sponsor's intent to increase the percentage of beverage containers recycled in the State and reduce litter, the unintended negative impacts of such a program on Maryland's existing recycling infrastructure outweigh any potential benefit.

Bottle bill expansions present an economic and disruptive burden to both recycling markets and local taxpayers. Requiring consumers to transport and deposit their recyclables at collection facilities removes up to 50 percent of plastics and aluminum from recycling streams. Reducing these valuable commodities increases curbside recycling costs for customers and municipalities. It may also threaten public and private recycling facilities, forcing them to cut jobs or shut down due to revenue loss.

Passing a bottle bill in Maryland will create duplication in the State's recycling process. Recycling technologies have advanced significantly since bottle bills were first adopted around the United States. Under a bottle bill, there would be two redundant recycling systems: a bottle bill system that recovers a limited percentage of the recycling stream and material recovery facilities (MRFs) that recover all other recyclables. Materials considered under the bottle bill expansion are already being recycled by MRFs. Solutions are needed for hard-to-recycle materials MRFs cannot process (i.e. film plastic, flexible pouches, toys, carpets, tires, textiles, mattresses, solar panels, wind turbines, batteries, and appliances).

Maryland residents would pay for two recycling systems under this proposal: a per-container fee under the expanded bottle bill system and a residential curbside or drop-off service for solid waste and recycling. They will also be directly impacted by additional costs: an upfront container deposit and potentially higher prices for consumer goods as producers pass along their handling costs. States initially adopted bottle bills as litter abatement programs before curbside recycling was commonplace. They are used by just ten states as jurisdictions have adopted curbside recycling as a more effective method of managing and promoting recycling.

We note that while the bill recognizes that local government recycling programs will lose revenue as materials are diverted and attempts to provide an offset for that revenue loss. There is not a similar offset for Maryland's three privately owned MRFs, which will experience the same revenue loss and will harm the local governments that rely on them.

Implementing a bottle bill in Maryland will harm recycling because the containers targeted for the expansion are currently being managed effectively in local recycling programs. They are key items in the recycling bin that have a positive commodity value. The value of those containers helps underwrite the

cost of delivering everyone's recycling services. Without these valuable recyclable containers in the general recyclables stream, the cost to municipalities, and ultimately Maryland resident taxpayers, to continue their recycling programs will assuredly go up. For these reasons, we respectfully request an **unfavorable** report on Senate Bill 346.

For more information:

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