

**Testimony Supporting SB0346**  
**Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**  
**February 18, 2025**

**Position: SUPPORT**

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Carlos Sanchez. I am a youth leader dedicated to building community power for environmental justice. I work with fellow residents at the South Baltimore Community Land Trust to make development without displacement and zero waste a reality. In 2020, we helped craft Baltimore's first Zero Waste plan, which was passed by city council and prioritized this bill as a critical step to move our city away from reliance on landfills and incineration. Now, in 2025, we are still waiting for Maryland to take this essential step forward.

As a resident of South Baltimore and someone who works in Curtis Bay, I live with the daily consequences of Maryland's failure to pass a pro-zero-waste bottle bill. Curtis Bay has an Environmental Justice (EJ) score of 100% according to the Maryland Department of the Environment's screening tool. The area ranks in the 91st percentile for asthma-related emergency room visits and the 88th percentile for low infant birth rates and heart attack discharges. These statistics are not abstract—they reflect the real struggles of my community.

This bill, informed by environmental justice communities, can provide tangible benefits:

1. **Reduce Pollution:** It will decrease toxic air pollution from incinerating plastics and cut greenhouse gas emissions.
2. **Save Taxpayer Dollars:** Local governments will save millions in waste disposal costs, which can be reinvested in zero-waste initiatives.
3. **Create Jobs:** This bill will generate employment opportunities in recycling and waste management.

Every day without this legislation, my community pays the price. In Lakeland, where I live, I wake up to the sight of the BRESKO trash-burning incinerator a mile away, breathing in its toxic emissions. In Curtis Bay, where I work, I walk past alleys filled with illegal dumping, often bottles and plastics. I speak with neighbors worried about asthma, struggling to feel pride in their community, and losing time with their families because they're cleaning up litter. Meanwhile, trash trucks carry more waste to the city landfill in South Baltimore, where ashes from incinerated bottles are dumped.

This is what it feels like to live next to a broken waste system—one that burns, buries, and pollutes our neighborhoods. It's unsafe, unhealthy, and unsustainable.

Maryland has a choice. By voting for this bill, you can help repair our waste system and bring relief to environmental justice communities like mine. While it won't solve everything, this legislation is a crucial step toward reducing plastic waste, cutting toxic emissions, and improving our shared environment and health. I urge you to issue a favorable report.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

**Sincerely,**  
Carlos Sanchez