



SB346 – Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program

**Testimony before
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**

February 18, 2024

Position: Favorable

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the committee, my name is Crystal Konny, and I represent the 900+ members of Indivisible Howard County. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members). We are providing written testimony today in **support of SB346**, Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program. We appreciate the leadership of Senator Brooks and his colleagues for sponsoring this important legislation.

The bill establishes a program that will collect a small deposit for each bottle purchased. The deposits will be refunded when the container is returned to the retailer or a redemption facility. Retailers and redemption facilities receive a handling fee for processing the returned bottles. The program will be self-financing, creating no new costs for the taxpayers.

Approximately 5.2 billion beverage containers are sold in Maryland annually, and fewer than a quarter are recycled. Three-quarters of the beverage containers end up as litter, or are incinerated or dumped in landfills. Containers that are left in the wild are very problematic. Such containers, especially plastic ones, are harmful to both the environment and to wildlife, particularly in marine environments like the Chesapeake Bay.

This legislation will increase the source of recycled materials for use in new bottles, and will work hand in hand with HB168, Maryland's Postconsumer Recycled Content Program bill which will stimulate the demand for materials to be recycled.

Ten states in the U.S., covering about 90 million people, have longstanding, successful beverage container deposit programs. The states with a 10-cent deposit, such as Michigan and Oregon, have a 90% recycling rate. It would be fantastic if Maryland could say the same.

I live in a neighborhood of houses, townhomes, and garden apartments. The view from my home includes a stream that shortly leads to the Middle Patuxent River and, eventually, to the Chesapeake Bay. Litter washes up in this stream, mostly beverage containers and plastic bags. This bill would give the neighbors an incentive to keep the bottles out of the stream and land around the stream, keeping Maryland's waterways and neighborhoods cleaner.

For all of these reasons, we urge you to pass the Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program. It is long-overdue. Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation. **We respectfully urge a favorable committee report.**

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