



Barbara Noveau, Executive Director, DoTheMostGood—Montgomery County

Committee: Environment and Transportation

Testimony on: HB824—Beverage Container Deposit Program—Establishment and Advisory Commission

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: February 26, 2020

Bill Contact: Delegate Sara Love

To: The Honorable Kumar P. Barve, Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee, and Committee Members

DoTheMostGood—Montgomery County (DTMG) is a progressive grassroots organization with more than 1600 members who live in a wide range of communities from Bethesda near the DC line north to Germantown and beyond, and from Potomac east to Silver Spring and Olney. DTMG supports legislation and activities that keep its members healthy and safe in a clean environment. DTMG strongly supports HB824 because establishing a beverage container deposit program will improve the quality of the environment and enhance public health and safety.

In a typical beverage container deposit program, when a retailer receives a shipment of beverages in bottles or cans, it pays a deposit to the distributor. The deposit fee is then collected from the consumer when a bottle or can is sold. Consumers get a refund of the deposit if they return the container to the retailer or to a recycling center established within the state. The retailer then returns the container to the distributor and is refunded the deposit plus a handling fee. If the container is not returned, the retailer loses only the potential handling fee because the deposit it paid to the distributor was passed on to the consumer.

Beverage container deposit laws are successful in other states. Ten states and Guam already have beverage container deposit laws; Oregon established the first program in 1971. In California, private sector recycling centers recycle 55-65% of beverage containers, supermarket-based recyclers account for about 25% of beverage container recycling, and curbside recycling accounts for about 20% of beverage container recycling. California estimates that its law prevents the landfilling or littering of more than 80% (17 billion) of the containers used in California annually.

Beverage container deposit programs benefit the environment in several important ways: First, beverage container deposit programs reduce unsightly roadside litter caused by discarded cans, bottles, and cups. Urban litter causes serious environmental harm because it is the primary source of litter pollution in waterways. Plastic litter, including beverage containers, is easily transported through creeks, other waterways, or storm drains to the ocean. Plastic in the ocean harms marine animals and breaks down to microparticles which make their way into our food chain.

Second, beverage container deposit programs also minimize waste in landfills and reduce air pollution emitted from incinerators. Beverage containers make up about 4-6% of municipal solid waste by weight. Incineration of plastic waste releases a variety of toxins into the air we all breathe, exacerbating asthma and causing other respiratory diseases.

In addition, by increasing recycling of glass, aluminum, and plastic, beverage container deposit programs reduce the need for mining and for using petroleum to make new containers. Producing new beverage containers from virgin materials accounts for up to 20% of greenhouse gas emissions, which cause climate change. Beverage container recycling in California alone prevents the emission of more than 300,000 tons of greenhouse gas emissions annually.

Furthermore, beverage deposit programs also contribute to the public health and safety by reducing broken glass in playgrounds, parks, and other urban areas. Lacerations and abrasions account for up to 50% of all childhood injuries, and broken glass is one of the most common causes of these injuries. A 1996 study found that the beverage deposit program in Massachusetts had immediate public health and safety benefits. The researchers found that in the first year following the 1982 enactment of the deposit legislation, the incidence of glass-related lacerations requiring sutures in the emergency rooms dropped by approximately 60 percent. By providing incentives for the return of empty containers, urban children particularly benefited by reducing their exposure to broken glass

The benefits of beverage container deposit programs demonstrated above are clear. For all of the reasons mentioned above, DTMG strongly supports HB824 and urges a **Favorable** report on the bill.

Respectfully submitted,

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