



February 9, 2021

*Via electronic submission*

**Re: SUPPORT for HB 99 – Beverage Container Deposit Program - Establishment and Advisory Commission**

Dear Chairmen Barve and Davis, and Members of the Environment and Transportation and Economic Matters Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment in support of HB 99. Blue Water Baltimore is the watershed-based nonprofit focused on improving water quality and community resilience within Baltimore City and Baltimore County, and is home to the Baltimore Harbor Waterkeeper. We strongly support this bill and its purpose to establish an advisory commission to develop a beverage container deposit program.

Baltimore City is one of the few jurisdictions in the United States with a waterway listed as “impaired” under the Federal Clean Water Act for trash. This means that trash is so prevalent in the streams that empty into the Baltimore Harbor that the Harbor itself is not meeting water quality standards and that significant efforts are necessary to reverse this scenario. Establishing a state-wide beverage container deposit program would reduce the amount of trash that enters the waste stream in the first place, and would ultimately lead to cleaner, healthier waterways in the Baltimore region and beyond.

As the Baltimore Harbor Waterkeeper, I routinely patrol the local streams that flow into the Patapsco and Back Rivers to monitor water quality and seek out chronic sources of pollution. I have seen first-hand the huge rafts of plastic bottles that get trapped and restrict flow in our urban streams, which contribute to flooding during heavy rain events. Swaths of trash, especially plastic bottles, act as high-water marks along the Gwynns Falls trail where the stream has crested the banks. The visible trash is only a fraction of what makes its way downstream into the Baltimore Harbor, the Patapsco River, and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay.

Baltimore City led the charge to ban the use of Expanded Polystyrene (EPS) Foam in 2018 and that effort helped persuade State lawmakers to do the same shortly thereafter. In 2019, Baltimore City joined other Maryland jurisdictions to ban single-use plastic bags from most restaurants and retail outlets, and we hope to see that change replicated on a state-wide basis with the passage of additional legislation this year. The next step needed to tackle Baltimore’s waterway trash problem is to establish a beverage container deposit program to reduce the number of plastic bottles that plague our shorelines; but we know that this effort cannot operate in a vacuum, and it will only be successful if it is implemented as a state-wide solution.

For these reasons, Blue Water Baltimore, on behalf of our thousands of members and supporters, respectfully requests a FAVORABLE report on HB 99.

Thank you,

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Blue Water Baltimore  
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*Attachment #1*  
*Attachment #2*  
*Attachment #3*  
*Attachment #4*

Attachment #1: Bottles and assorted trash accumulated in the Powder Mill Run, Baltimore County, MD. 3/16/2014.



Attachment #2: Bottles and assorted trash accumulated in the Gwynns Run, Baltimore City, MD. 4/17/2018.



Attachment #3: Bottles and assorted trash accumulated at Masonville Cove, Baltimore City, MD. 3/24/2011.



Attachment #4: Bottles and assorted trash accumulated at Ferry Bar Park, Baltimore City, MD.  
8/28/2015.

