

Testimony in Support of Maryland Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program
HB 1089
Environment and Transportation
March 7, 2023

Hello, my name is Dave Arndt, a resident of Baltimore MD. I am writing on behalf of myself to urge a favorable report on HB1089.

Living by the harbor in Baltimore, I see hundred of beverage containers floating in the water almost daily. Unfortunately, when they are collected by our trash wheels and harbor cleanup teams, they are taken to the incinerator, where residents can breathe in the air and get asthma, cancers and a shorter life span. Also, this is a tremendous waste of money and city resources.

Marylanders buy more than 5.2 billion beverage containers annually, but only about a quarter of them are recycled. Four billion containers every year end up in the environment – in the landfill, incinerated, or littering the landscape and waterways.

Beverage containers are half of the trash by volume in the Anacostia River watershed and are pervasive in Baltimore Harbor. Plastic bottles are the third most frequently littered plastic in beach cleanups. They break into microplastics, are consumed by wildlife, and move up the food chain. Humans are ingesting up to a credit card's worth of plastic a week!

The Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program (HB 1089) would reduce beverage container litter by as much as two-thirds, reducing plastic pollution, and more than triple the recycling rate for beverage containers in Maryland to 90%. It would add a small deposit to the cost of beverage containers that is refunded to customers when the containers are returned for recycling. Under this program, you're buying the beverage, but borrowing the container. The deposit is a powerful incentive to return used beverage containers and to collect those that are littered, for their refund value!

Ten states, covering about 90 million people, have longstanding, highly successful beverage container recycling refund programs. Two of them, Michigan and Oregon, have achieved recycling rates of 90% with a 10-cent deposit. These programs collect clean, source-separated materials that can be used in the production of new containers, reducing greenhouse gasses and saving energy compared to products made from virgin materials.

The program would also lower the costs to local government for recycling, landfilling, incinerating, and collection of littered beverage containers, while creating new green jobs. It would be entirely self-financed and ease the burden on taxpayers!

Now is the time to act! Pass the Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program today! Every year we wait, another 4 billion beverage containers enter the environment.

Dave Arndt