



Testimony on HB 1089
Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program
Position: Favorable

March 7, 2023

Environment and Transportation and Economic Matters
Maryland Senate

Mr. Chair and members of the committee,

My name is Chelsea Anspach and I am the Communications Manager with the Waterfront Partnership of Baltimore.

The Waterfront Partnership of Baltimore submits this testimony in support of a redeemable deposit on beverage containers. We are a Business Improvement District responsible for maintaining, improving, and protecting Baltimore's Inner Harbor. We represent major businesses and developers located along the Baltimore Waterfront. In 2009 we set a goal, in partnership with Baltimore City, to have a swimmable and fishable Baltimore Harbor. To that end, we have supported the implementation of the stormwater management fee, installed four of the world's first solar-powered water wheel trash interceptors, and advocated for City Council proposals aimed at reducing litter in our neighborhoods and streams. We do this because it is good for the environment but also because it is good for business.

The Inner Harbor has been the driving economic force in Baltimore throughout our City's history. When it was an industrial center, little attention was paid to the quality of the water. Now the Inner Harbor is a center for tourism and business receiving 24.3 million visitors in 2021 and generating \$2.7 billion in overall economic activity. Visitors, residents, and employees have an expectation of what they will experience when they go to the Inner Harbor and if we fail to meet that expectation visitors may not return, businesses may relocate, and residents may move elsewhere. We know that expectation includes clean parks and healthy water. Waterfront Partnership works to keep our waterfront parks clean, but the water can be more challenging.

The Inner Harbor sits at the end of the Jones Falls, a stream that drains 64 square miles of land in Baltimore City and Baltimore County. When it rains, a tremendous amount of litter comes down the Jones Falls and covers the Harbor. That is why, in May of 2014, we installed the world's first solar powered water wheel trash interceptor, Mr. Trash Wheel. Since then, we have added 3 more trash wheels to the Trash Wheel Family at other watershed outfalls around the Baltimore Harbor. Not only do the trash wheels capture most of the floating trash coming down the stream, they also allow us to keep track of what types of trash we are collecting. Over the last nine years the Trash Wheel family has picked up 1,812,576 plastic bottles. That's 552 bottles every day! If each bottle were worth ten cents, it would total \$181, 258. Instead they are seen as worthless and go to the incinerator.

WATERFRONT PARTNERSHIP OF BALTIMORE

The businesses that make up Waterfront Partnership pay us to collect this litter, but they would rather we spend their money on events, landscaping, and attractions like the Inner Harbor Ice Rink. This bill would simultaneously save businesses money and increase revenue around the Harbor because a Harbor that is clean and healthy is a harbor that people will visit time and again.

Beverage container litter negatively effects tourism and business in Baltimore. The time has come to do something about it. Mr. Trash Wheel has become a global sensation. He has been viewed over a million times on YouTube and has 30k Instagram Followers. Mr. Trash Wheel has been featured on NBC News, National Geographic, the National Weather Channel, National Public Radio, Voice of America, and in the Huffington Post because it is an innovative solution to cleaning up litter. Maryland, however, should be known for being proactive in keeping litter out of its waterways, not just for our innovative solutions for cleaning it up. A redeemable deposit on beverage containers is a proven and lasting solution to this public problem.

We respectfully ask for a favorable report on HB 1089. Thank you for your time this afternoon, and I look forward to your questions.

Contact:

Chelsea Anspach

Environmental Communication Manager, Healthy Harbor Initiative

Waterfront Partnership of Baltimore

(443) 743-3309

Chelsea@WaterfrontPartnership.org

WATERFRONT PARTNERSHIP OF BALTIMORE



Gwynnda the Good Wheel of the West (the newest trash wheel) after a large storm in West Baltimore.

WATERFRONT PARTNERSHIP OF BALTIMORE



Plastic water bottles being collected at Gwynnda the Good Wheel of the West.

WATERFRONT PARTNERSHIP OF BALTIMORE

**The Trash Wheel Family has collected:
2,362.23 Tons of Trash**

Plastic Bags



938,626

Cigarette Butts



13,036,008

Plastic Bottles



1,812,576

Foam Containers



1,383,053

Sports Balls



7,076

A Keg



A Guitar



A Snake



Trash Wheel Trash Collection Totals (May 16, 2014 to March 7, 2023)

WATERFRONT PARTNERSHIP OF BALTIMORE



Mr. Trash Wheel after a large storm in the Inner harbor.

WATERFRONT PARTNERSHIP OF BALTIMORE



Image of trash being picked up by the Water Wheel (267 bottles pictured on the surface)

WATERFRONT PARTNERSHIP OF BALTIMORE



Image of litter in Baltimore City (93 bottles in pictured)