



P.O. Box 4314
Silver Spring, MD 20914

February 26, 2024

Re: FAVORABLE position on HB0735 Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program

Dear Chair Korman and Committee members,

Thank you for your service to the State of Maryland. I am writing on behalf of Neighbors of the Northwest Branch (NNWB), a local 501(C)(3) nonprofit, citizen-based action group dedicated to restoring the health of the Northwest Branch of the Anacostia River. We work to ensure that this urban treasure can be safely enjoyed by wildlife, our families, and Montgomery and Prince Georges county residents for generations to come.

NNWB takes a FAVORABLE position on HB0735, the Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program. We respectfully ask that you issue a favorable committee report and continue to support it through passage.

HB0735 would solve two major problems: littering and lack of recycling of single-use beverage containers (e.g., plastic water and soda bottles, beer bottles, cans), which have negative environmental and economic impacts. As we know from the many clean ups we have led and the time we spend enjoying the watershed, discarded single-use beverage containers are common due to littering or unintentional loss from recycling bins and trucks. The Anacostia Watershed Society determined that beverage containers are one of the most common litter items in Anacostia River trash traps. Plastic bottles break into tiny toxic particles (microplastics) that contaminate soil and waterways and enter the food chain when animals ingest them.

Data indicate that less than one-quarter of beverage containers sold in Maryland are recycled, resulting in continued use of virgin materials, which has negative impacts on the environment and climate. Of the 5.2 billion beverage containers sold in Maryland annually, only about 1.2 billion (23 percent) are recycled while 4 billion are wasted—landfilled, littered or incinerated.

HB0735 addresses these problems by creating a statewide deposit and return system with a small deposit (10 or 15 cents) that consumers would pay when they purchase beverages and

then receive back when they return beverage containers for recycling. HB0735 provides for the establishment of efficient, conveniently located redemption facilities with measures to prevent fraud, a Stewardship Organization representing producers that sell beverage containers in Maryland, and a Plan approved by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE). MDE would provide oversight and enforcement, with input from an Advisory Council.

The proposed deposit system is a proven model: ten states, covering about 90 million people, have long standing, successful beverage container deposit programs. Data indicate that programs with at least a 10-cent refundable deposit recover as much as 90 percent of used beverage containers for reuse or recycling - a result that equates to tripling Maryland's current beverage container recycling rate.

The approach that HB0735 proposes is cost effective as it leverages beverage industry funding to launch and maintain the program, avoiding increased costs for the government, and provides an incentive for consumers to maximize recycling. Moreover, it would reduce the costs of collecting, recycling, landfilling and incinerating beverage containers for governments and consumers, provide high quality, food-grade recycled content that can be made into new containers, stimulate regional recycling markets, improve water quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and energy use, and stimulate investments in refillable and reusable beverage container systems.

For these reasons, NNWB endorses HB0735 and asks that the committee return a favorable report and support its passage in the House. HB0735 is a win-win and a positive return on investment for governments, consumers and producers.

Thank you for considering NNWB's comments on this important measure.

Sincerely,

Nora Swisher
President, Neighbors of the Northwest Branch
www.neighborsnwb.org