



Feb 26th 2024

POSITION: SUPPORT

South Baltimore Community Land Trust's Favorable Testimony for HB0735 Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program

Dear members of the Environmental and Transportation Committee,

My name is Carlos Sanchez. I am a youth leader committed to organizing community power for environmental justice and I work alongside fellow residents at the South Baltimore Community Land Trust where we are working to make development without displacement and zero waste a reality. Together, we helped create Baltimore's first zero waste plan back in 2020 - passed by city council - which included the bottle bill as a priority action to help advance Baltimore away from reliance on landfilling and incineration. But as we all know - we're now in 2024 and still don't have this basic step forward that we need.

Instead, I live the consequences of Maryland's choice not to pass pro zero waste bottle bill legislation every single day. I live in South Baltimore and work in Curtis Bay. Curtis Bay has an overall EJ score of 100% according to MDE's EJ Screening Tool. The neighborhood is also in the 90.57th percentile for asthma emergency room discharges; 87.90th percentile for low infant birth rates; and 88.38th percentile for myocardial infarction discharges.

How will a strong bottle bill, informed by environmental justice communities, make a difference for me, my family and my communities? First, it will reduce toxic air pollution from burning plastic as well as Greenhouse gas emissions. Second, it will save local governments millions of dollars in waste disposal fees that it can then invest in more zero waste solutions like re-use. And third, it will create jobs.

But now I want to share how Maryland's failure to pass this piece of zero waste legislation impacts me everyday....First, when I wake up in the morning in my community of Lakeland I can see the BRESKO trash burning incinerator just about a mile away burning tons of plastic bottles that I breathe in. I want everyone to stop right now - close your eyes and take a breath. Now imagine that every breath you take includes toxic chemicals from burning plastics. How do you feel? The air we breathe in EJ communities is what's at stake with Maryland's Bottle bill.

Now open your eyes.



Next, when I go to work in Curtis Bay in South Baltimore I walk by alleys and vacant homes filled with illegal dumping - mostly plastic and glass bottles. This makes the community less safe and reduces our quality of life. And as I connect with fellow community members - hearing their concerns about family members with asthma or wanting to feel proud about their community - or wanting to spend less time cleaning up litter and more time enjoying time with their families — i see trash trucks on their way to the city landfill - that's also in south baltimore...that's where the burnt ash with all the leftovers from those burnt bottles ends up.

This is what a failed waste system - one that only knows how to burn and bury and dump feels like when you're up close to it everyday. It's not safe, it feels terrible and it smells like burning plastic.

But Maryland has a choice. By choosing the Bottle Bill we can do a lot for environmental justice communities like mine in South Baltimore. It's a logical part of a system approach to our failed waste system that also includes - it won't change my everyday experience overnight - but it will reduce the number of bottles dumped in my community, it will reduce the amount of toxic plastic waste i'm breathing in and exposed to in my environment. And for me - that's a great choice for Maryland and for our shared health and environment.

Sincerely,

Carlos Sanchez

South Baltimore Community Land Trust
www.sbclt.org