

Committee: Environment and Transportation

Testimony on: HB0735 -Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program

Submitted by Anne Ambler as an individual

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: February 28, 2024

Dear Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce and Committee Members:

Thank you for the good work you and your committee have been doing, and thank you for this opportunity to encourage **a favorable report for HB0735**. HB0735 addresses our major problem of unhealthy, unsightly beverage container litter in a way that has proven highly effective in other states.

Manufacturers have placed the onus for recycling on the public and governments, but in reality, only 23 percent of the 5.2 billion beverage containers sold annually in Maryland are recycled, leaving 4 billion in our streams, on our roads, in landfills, or incinerated. For the last 20 years I have participated in or led stream cleanups, collecting the bottles and cans that groups of partying kids and careless individuals have left behind. Some of these can be recycled, but many are too dirty and must be trashed. The plastic bottles that become buried in the mud and beyond our reach biodegrade slowly and we are all aware of the consumption by fish, animals, and us humans of quite a large amount of microplastics. While we don't know exactly the level of harm to our own health, it is pretty clear that our state's streams and wildlife would be much better off without this form of pollution.

HB0735 would change the incentives by imposing a 10 or 15-cent returnable fee on every beverage container sold in Maryland, depending on size. I have seen this work in other states, where the return rate can reach 90 percent with at least a 10-cent fee. In Europe the fees can be even higher. If the partyers in our parks, or the drivers who toss bottles from the car do not care about getting their deposits back, you can count on other people to collect these containers as fast as they are deposited. Money is money, after all. And in the case of plastic bottles, when returned clean, this food-grade plastic content can be made into new containers, saving resources.

The program is revenue neutral, self-funding, always useful in a budget crunch. Truly, the time has come to join other forward- looking states in implementing a program that reduces litter, improves water quality and health, and saves resources. I urge the committee to issue a favorable report on **HB0735 - Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program**.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

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