



February 26, 2024

Chairman Marc Korman and Committee Members
Environment and Transportation Committee
Room 251 House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

HB 735/SB 642- Favorable

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the House Committee on Environment and Transportation:

The Story of Stuff Project is a national U.S. based nonprofit organization with more than a million Changemakers worldwide, including nearly 1,000 supporters in the state of Maryland. Our mission is to change the way we make, use, and throw away all the Stuff in our lives.

It's time for Maryland to have a bottle bill. With only 23% of the 5.2 billion beverage containers sold in Maryland collected for recycling, 4 billion one-way beverage containers litter roadways and pollute waterways and are burned or buried, wasting precious resources and creating more pollution. Bottle deposits are the best way to ensure that beverage containers get returned for recycling and to prevent litter. The state has been considering attaching a deposit to beverage containers since the 1980s.

Given the linked and increasing crises of climate change and plastic pollution, action to collect single-use beverage containers for recycling and to transition to reusable beverage containers is long overdue. We support HB735/SB642 for the following reasons.

(1) By targeting 10% reuse by 2034, this bill recognizes that it's time to bring back refillable beverage containers. In the 1960s, the beverage industry in the U.S. made the switch from reusable bottles that it collected, washed and refilled, to single-use cans and bottles that became a waste stream local government and communities had to deal with. But this isn't true in much of the world. Refillable beverage containers are still used by the beverage industry in 170 countries worldwide. Reusables represent an overall market share of 23% by volume globally. Most of the top 10 global non-alcoholic beverage markets, including China, Mexico, Indonesia, India, Brazil, Germany, and Turkey have reusable market shares ranging from 26% - 61%.

Recycling alone isn't enough. Globally, more than 580 billion polyethylene terephthalate (PET) plastic beverage bottles are produced each year – *nearly 1 million per minute*, which accounts for one-quarter of the world's use of PET plastic. Transitioning to reusable bottles is imperative to reduce materials, water, waste, and climate impacts. Reuse can reduce up to 40% of raw materials inputs and 50% of greenhouse gas emissions associated with beverage packaging. It also achieves lower water and waste impacts. Coca-Cola's Universal PET bottle compared to a single-use bottle was found to reduce carbon emissions up to 47% and the water footprint by 45%. After a third use, reusable glass bottles are already less impactful than single-use glass, PET or aluminum cans. Used 25 times and then recycled, reusable glass bottles create 85% fewer

climate emissions than single-use glass; 57% fewer than aluminum cans; and 70% fewer than single-use PET according to ReLoop.

Reusables also benefit the ocean and local water waterways. [Oceana estimates](#) that a 10% increase in the share of beverages sold in reusables could result in a 22% decrease in marine plastic pollution, keeping 4.5 to 7.6 billion plastic bottles out of the ocean each year.

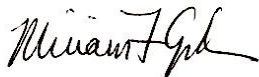
(2) The Trash Problem Necessitates Immediate Action. There is no need to wait for completion of a needs assessment in order to take action. We know already that single-use plastic beverage containers pollute our waterways and pose a threat to wildlife and human health. As a result of the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) requirement, local government is already spending too much money controlling trash entering Maryland waterways- half of which is beverage containers according to data from the Anacostia Watershed Society.

It is well established that when empty beverage containers can be redeemed for cash, few are littered or likely to remain littered. According to the Sierra Club, a deposit program would capture more than 3 billion additional beverage containers annually, including 1 billion plastic bottles. Water quality would be improved, recycling would increase, and greenhouse gas emissions related to beverage containers would be reduced. There's no need to wait on taking action to achieve these benefits.

(3) Increasing recycling and adding refillables is good for Maryland's economy. The beverage deposit program would shift the financial burden of managing beverage container waste from local governments to the producers of beverages that profit from selling beverages. Recycling generated from that deposit program is estimated to create 5 times as many jobs as landfilling or incineration. Reuse creates even more jobs as additional jobs are created for sorting and washing refillable beverage bottles.

For these reasons, we urge you to vote AYE on this important measure. Please feel free to contact me at miriam@storyofstuff.org if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Miriam Gordon". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Miriam Gordon
Reuse Accelerator