

Mr. Chair and members of the committee,

Thank you for your time. My name is Allison Blood and I am the Environmental Program Manager with the Waterfront Partnership of Baltimore.

The Waterfront Partnership submits this testimony in favor of HB 735, the Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program.

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 trash wheels, 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 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 at other watershed outfalls around the Baltimore Harbor. Over the last nine years our googly eyed friends have picked up over **one million eight hundred thousand** plastic bottles. This is only 0.05% of the bottles produced in Maryland that end up as trash or litter annually. Capturing plastic bottles in our waterways is not a solution. We've heard about the havoc this litter wreaks on our public spaces, wildlife and habitat, and human health. The trash wheels are a temporary solution to an urgent problem. This bottle bill will turn off the tap of plastic bottle pollution in our environment.

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.

Policy change has been the key to reducing other types of litter in our waterways. Maryland's polystyrene ban led to an 80% reduction in styrofoam collected by the trash wheels. Baltimore city and Baltimore county plastic bag bans have led to a 35% reduction in plastic bags collected by Mr. Trash Wheel in the short time they have been implemented.

We respectfully ask for a favorable report on HB 1089. Thank you for your time.

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