

February 18, 2025

**SB 346- Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund
and Litter Reduction Program
Position - Favorable**

Mr. Chair, Madam Vice Chair and members of the committee,

Thank you for your time. My name is Allison Blood and I am here on behalf of the Waterfront Partnership of Baltimore. I submit this testimony in favor of SB 346.

Representing major businesses and developers along the Baltimore Waterfront, Waterfront Partnership is a Business Improvement District responsible for maintaining, improving, and protecting Baltimore's Inner Harbor. In 2010 we set a goal, in partnership with the City, to have a swimmable and fishable Baltimore Harbor. To that end, we have supported many restoration efforts including the installation of four trash wheels in the Baltimore Harbor. We have used the data from trash collection to inform legislation and prove the efficacy of policy change to reduce plastic pollution including the statewide foam container ban and plastic bag bans in Baltimore City and Baltimore County. We do this because it is good for the environment and because it is good for business.

The businesses that make up the Waterfront Partnership Improvement District pay us to collect litter with a cleaning budget of one point five million dollars a year, but that money would be better spent on events, landscaping, and attractions that bring people to the Inner Harbor. The same is true for saving taxpayer money by reducing municipal costs for litter removal and waste disposal as only 23% of recyclable material actually gets recycled. The rest is burned, buried, or littered with taxpayers footing the bill for unnecessary clean-up costs.

Container deposit laws have been beneficial in other ways: saving taxpayer money by reducing waste disposal costs, reducing our reliance on foreign oil, and creating new jobs in the recycling sector.

This bill would simultaneously save businesses money and increase revenue around the Harbor because a Harbor that is clean and healthy is one that people will visit time and again.

The Inner Harbor sits at the end of the Jones Falls 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. Over the past nine years, Mr. Trash Wheel and the Trash Wheel family have been the last line of defense to prevent our Harbor from being covered with litter collecting over two point five million plastic bottles. This is only six-hundredths of ONE percent of the beverage containers produced in Maryland yearly that end up as trash or litter.

Capturing plastic bottles in our waterways is not a solution, it is an urgent problem and we need this Bottle Bill to create a real solution to reduce beverage container litter.

We respectfully request a favorable report on SB 346. Thank you for your time.

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