



Committee: Environment and Transportation
Testimony on: HB232 - Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program
Organization: Maryland Legislative Coalition Climate Justice Wing
Submitting: Monica O'Connor, Co-Chair
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: February 14, 2025

Dear Chair and Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing our testimony today in support of HB232. The Maryland Legislative Coalition (MLC) Climate Justice Wing, a statewide coalition of nearly 30 grassroots and professional organizations, urges you to vote favorably on HB232.

The Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction aka the “MD bottle bill” is a very sensible bill. It is an easy, low-hanging fruit solution to reduce plastic pollution and greenhouse gas emissions by reducing the energy needed to produce new beverage containers.

Beverage container deposit programs are a proven, highly effective policy for recovering used beverage containers and reducing litter. This bill would create a beverage container deposit program in Maryland with a 10 or 15-cent refundable deposit, depending on the size of the container. The deposit is refunded to the customer when the bottle is returned and is estimated to achieve a 90% return rate - up from a 25% rate today.

This program would be self-funded from fees paid by producers, revenue from the sale of raw materials, unclaimed deposits, and penalties. So while the state and local counties are grappling with extremely tight budgets, the program established by the bill would not cost the state at all and would relieve the counties and ultimately the taxpayers from the burden of expensive waste/ recycling costs.

This bill would provide a high rate of return for containers by creating incentives for the development of refillable and reusable containers. It isn't cost effective to produce reusable containers if they are not being returned as part of a circular and zero waste economy. We also note recycling refund programs for beverage containers can go hand in hand with legislation to adopt producer responsibility for packaging. Well-designed producer responsibility programs can help us *reduce* our volume of waste, while modern recycling refund programs help us *reuse* and *recycle* a major portion of the packaging waste stream. Recycling refund programs help capture highly recyclable beverage containers that might otherwise be wasted or littered to satisfy high demand for high quality recycled materials.

Three substantive changes to the 2025 Bottle Bill include:

- **Explicitly excluding cartons, pouches, and aseptic packaging**

- **Authorizing the Grant program for reuse/refill to finance an evaluation of the investments and policies required to increase the share of reusable containers sold in the state by 2035.**
- **Adding language to allow MDE to add additional container types in the future as redemption technology and the container materials change over time.**

The State of Maryland needs to protect our waterways and our beloved Chesapeake Bay from plastic and litter pollution and this bill will accomplish this goal. Beverage container deposit programs are a proven, highly effective policy for recovering used beverage containers and reducing litter. Ten states, covering more than 90 million people, have longstanding, successful programs. The MLC Climate Justice Wing strongly supports HB232 and urges a FAVORABLE report in Committee.

350MoCo

Adat Shalom Climate Action

Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church Environmental Justice Ministry

Chesapeake Earth Holders

Climate Parents of Prince George's

Climate Reality Project

ClimateXChange – Rebuild Maryland Coalition

Coming Clean Network, Union of Concerned Scientists

DoTheMostGood Montgomery County

Echotopia

Elders Climate Action

Fix Maryland Rail

Glen Echo Heights Mobilization

Greenbelt Climate Action Network

HoCoClimateAction

IndivisibleHoCoMD

Maryland Legislative Coalition

Mobilize Frederick

Montgomery County Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions

Montgomery Countryside Alliance

Mountain Maryland Movement

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Takoma Park Mobilization Environment Committee

The Climate Mobilization MoCo Chapter

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