

February 11, 2025

Chair Korman, Environment and Transportation Committee

Maryland House of Delegates Room 251

House Office Building Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Testimony in Support of HB 232 – Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program

Dear Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and Members of the Maryland Environment and Transportation Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB0232. I am strongly in favor of this legislation. It would reduce litter from beverage containers, reduce plastic pollution in our environment, and reduce the burden on local municipalities from additional waste that must be collected, processed, and disposed of by incineration or landfill.

When I take walks in communities anywhere in Maryland I see a lot of litter, in the streets, in parks, in our waterways. This litter represents a tremendous source of pollution when the plastic breaks down into microplastics and gets absorbed into our soil and water. And we are ingesting those microplastics through our food and water.

I've visited my County recycling center and I've seen the tremendous mounds of glass, aluminum, and plastic containers. The workload on our County is huge and they do an amazing job, collecting, sorting, and dealing with all of our waste. The volumes of waste grow each year. We could reduce one source of waste from the stream by recycling beverage containers and take some of the load from our municipalities.

The Problem

About 5.5 billion beverage containers are sold in Maryland annually. Despite widespread availability of curbside collection of recyclables and public recycling receptacles, only a quarter of the containers (25%) are captured for recycling. More than 4 billion containers a year, 2.6 billion of which are plastic, are left in the environment each year. The number littered is significant: Beverage containers are more than half of the trash by volume in the Anacostia watershed's trash traps.

The Solution

Beverage container deposit programs are a proven, highly effective policy for recovering used beverage containers and reducing litter. They add a small deposit to the purchase price of beverage containers that is refunded to customers when the containers are returned for recycling.

When empty beverage containers can be redeemed for cash, fewer are littered or likely to remain littered. The refundable deposit is an incentive to return. The recycling rate for deposit beverage containers is 2-3 times higher than for containers not subject to a deposit, and the impact is greater with higher deposits. States with a 10-cent deposit have achieved container recycling rates of 90%.

The Benefits

Reduction in beverage container litter and plastic pollution, and an increase in water quality. It would capture 3.6 billion additional beverage containers annually, including 2.3 billion plastic bottles.

- Quadrupling of Maryland's beverage container recycling rate. The estimated recycling rate, currently only 25% of containers sold in the state, would increase to more than 90% with the Bottle Bill.
- Increase in high quality, food-grade recycled content for new food and beverage containers. The program would generate an additional 13,328 tons of aluminum, 47,665 tons of PET plastic, 7,847 tons of HDPE plastic, and 159,397 tons of glass to be recycled into new containers, annually.
- Reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. By reducing the production of new cans and bottles from virgin materials, the additional recycling from this program would eliminate 231,707 metric tons of CO2 equivalent annually, the equivalent of removing the emissions of 50,371 cars.
- Savings for taxpayers and local governments. Beverage producers would finance the costs of collection, processing, and recycling of beverage containers currently disposed, littered, and recycled, diverting materials from landfills and incinerators, saving costs for taxpayers and local governments.
- Investments in refillable and reusable beverage container systems. Deposits are critical for development of refillable and reusable containers. The program would launch that transition.
- Job creation. Recycling generated by a deposit program creates five times more jobs as landfilling or incineration.

Support the Maryland Bottle Bill to reduce litter, prevent plastic pollution, increase recycling, and conserve resources!

I urge you to issue a Favorable review of HB 232 – Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program.

Thank you,

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