

Subject: Urgent Concerns Regarding HB 232 - Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program - Impact on Prince George's County Retail Businesses

Dear Members of the Prince George's County House and Senate Delegations

The Prince George's Chamber of Commerce writes to you today with serious concerns regarding House Bill 232, the Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program. We believe this legislation, in its current form, will have a significant and detrimental impact on retail businesses within Prince George's County.

Our members, representing a diverse range of retail establishments, have expressed deep reservations about the proposed implementation of a mandatory beverage container deposit and return program. We are particularly concerned about the following issues:

Increased Operational Costs: The implementation of a deposit and return system will impose substantial new operational costs on retailers. These costs include the need for dedicated storage space, the purchase and maintenance of reverse vending machines or manual collection systems, and the hiring of additional staff to manage the program. These costs will disproportionately affect smaller businesses with limited resources.

Logistical Challenges: Retailers, especially those in densely populated areas of Prince George's County, face significant logistical challenges in managing the storage and handling of returned beverage containers. The increased volume of containers will create storage and sanitation issues, potentially impacting the overall customer experience.

Competitive Disadvantage: Retailers located near county borders may face a competitive disadvantage as consumers may choose to purchase beverages in neighboring jurisdictions without deposit requirements. This could lead to a loss of sales and revenue for Prince George's County businesses.

Unfunded Mandates: The bill places a significant financial burden on retailers without providing adequate funding or support for implementation. This constitutes an unfunded mandate that will negatively impact the profitability and sustainability of local businesses.

Impact on Consumer Pricing: It is highly likely that the cost of implementing this program will be passed on to consumers, leading to increased prices for beverages. This could disproportionately affect low-income residents of Prince George's County.

Potential for fraud: The potential for fraudulent redemption of containers brought in from out of state is a serious concern.

We recognize the importance of addressing litter and promoting recycling. However, we believe that HB 232, as currently drafted, places an undue burden on retail businesses and fails to consider the unique challenges faced by our community.

Therefore, the Prince George's County Chamber of Commerce respectfully urges you to:

Oppose HB 232 in its current form.

Consider alternative recycling initiatives that are less burdensome on businesses and more effective in achieving environmental goals, such as Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR).

Ensure any recycling program is properly funded, and does not create unfunded mandates.

Consider the impact to small businesses especially.

We are committed to working with you to find solutions that balance environmental sustainability with the economic well-being of our community. We request the opportunity to discuss these concerns further with you and your staff.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Alexander K. Austin

Alexander K. Austin
President & CEO
Prince George's Chamber of Commerce