

Committee: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment
Legislation: SB 342
Position: SUPPORT
Date: February 10, 2026

Dear Chairman Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee:

The Severn River Association stands in strong support of **Senate Bill 342**, which would establish a beverage container deposit program in Maryland. This approach is proven across the country and internationally to dramatically reduce litter, cut recycling costs, and improve the quality of recovered materials.

Maryland generates an enormous volume of disposable beverage containers each year, and our current recycling systems are not capturing them. Approximately **5.5 billion beverage containers are sold in Maryland annually, yet only 25% are recycled.**¹ More than **4 billion containers—2.6 billion of them plastic—are discarded, littered, or incinerated every year.**² SB 342 offers a proven, cost-effective solution.

Deposit-return systems (DRS), or “bottle bills,” consistently outperform all other recycling approaches. A 2025 global analysis found that DRS programs **reduce beverage container litter by more than 50% on average** across the U.S., Europe, and Australia.³ States with long-standing programs—such as **Michigan, Oregon, Maine, and California**—regularly achieve **70–90% redemption rates**, dramatically reducing the volume of containers entering waterways and roadways.⁴ Maryland’s current litter profile mirrors that of states before they adopted deposit systems. The evidence is clear: if we want to cut container litter in half or more, a deposit program is the only proven tool.

Deposit programs do more than reduce litter—they strengthen recycling systems and reduce costs for local governments. Containers returned through DRS systems are far cleaner than curbside materials, sorted by material type, reducing contamination, and more valuable to manufacturers seeking recycled content.⁵ These benefits improve the economics of recycling statewide. Moreover, states with DRS report lower municipal litter-cleanup costs, reduced landfill and incineration volumes and less contamination in curbside recycling streams, lowering processing costs.⁶

Maryland currently pays for the consequences of low recycling rates—through cleanup, disposal, and environmental damage. SB 342 shifts responsibility upstream and creates a circular system where materials retain value, which will deliver environmental and public health benefits by reducing plastic pollution in waterways and microplastic generation, in turn reducing the levels of micro- and nanoplastics consumed by humans and animals alike.

¹ [01_23_2026-beverage-container-recycling-refund-litter-reduction-coalition-fact-sheet.pdf](#)

² *id*

³ https://resource-recycling.com/resource-recycling-magazine/2025/09/15/the-evidence-is-in-what-the-data-says-about-bottle-bills-litter-and-the-economy/?utm_source=copilot.com

⁴ [10 states Redemption Rates 080524](#)

⁵ [Bottle Deposit Laws Can Increase Plastics Recycling - Association of Plastic Recyclers \(APR\)](#)

⁶ [Microsoft Word - DRS Factsheet-Litter \(long\)-29Jan2021.docx](#)

Given that **2.6 billion plastic beverage containers** are discarded in Maryland each year, the potential environmental benefit is enormous. Maryland has long invested in protecting its waterways, yet beverage containers remain one of the most persistent and preventable sources of pollution. SB 342 is a practical, data-driven solution that will deliver immediate and long-term benefits.

For decades, deposit-return systems in other states have demonstrated their effectiveness in reducing litter, improving recycling, and saving taxpayer dollars. Maryland's current system captures only a fraction of the 5.5 billion containers sold each year, leaving billions to pollute our communities and waterways. SB 342 proposes a proven system which is fiscally responsible and an environmentally essential step forward.

I respectfully urge the Committee to give this bill a favorable report.

Respectfully submitted,



Jesse L. Iliff
Executive Director
Severn River Association
jesse@severnriver.org