



P.O. Box 4314
Silver Spring, MD 20914

February 6, 2026

Re: FAVORABLE position on SB0342, Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and Committee members,

Thank you for your service to the State of Maryland. I am writing on behalf of Neighbors of the Northwest Branch (NNWB), a local nonprofit dedicated to restoring the health of the Northwest Branch of the Anacostia River. We work to ensure that this urban treasure can be safely enjoyed by wildlife and residents in Montgomery and Prince George's county and beyond.

NNWB takes a FAVORABLE position on SB0342, the Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program. We respectfully ask that you issue a favorable committee report and continue to support it through passage.

SB0342 would help solve two major problems: littering and lack of recycling of single-use beverage containers (e.g., plastic water and soda bottles, beer bottles, cans), which have negative environmental and economic impacts. As we know from the many clean ups we have led and the time we spend enjoying the watershed, discarded single-use beverage containers are common due to littering or unintentional loss from recycling bins and trucks. The Anacostia Watershed Society determined that beverage containers are one of the most common litter items in Anacostia watershed trash traps, amounting to about half of the litter these traps collect. Plastic bottles break into tiny toxic particles (microplastics) that contaminate soil and waterways and enter the food chain when animals ingest them. An effective container deposit program will have a substantial impact on protecting and restoring the health and beauty of our local rivers, streams, communities, parks, and natural areas by reducing litter.

Data indicate that less than one-quarter of beverage containers sold in Maryland are recycled, resulting in continued use of virgin materials, which has negative impacts on the environment and climate and translates into wasted energy and the loss of jobs and other economic benefits supported by recycling. Of the 5.2 billion beverage containers sold in Maryland annually, only 1.2 billion (23 percent) are recycled while 4 billion are wasted—landfilled, littered or incinerated.

SB0342 addresses these problems by creating a statewide deposit and return system with a small deposit (10 or 15 cents) that consumers would pay when they purchase beverages and then receive back when they return beverage containers for recycling. SB0342 provides for the establishment of efficient, conveniently located redemption facilities with measures to prevent fraud, a Stewardship Organization representing producers that sell beverage containers in Maryland, and a Plan approved by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE). MDE would provide oversight and enforcement, with input from an Advisory Council.

To mitigate economic impacts on existing recycling haulers, the stewardship organization will reimburse public and private material recovery facilities for unredeemed redeemable containers they collect, and MDE must consult with local governments to assess the impacts of the program on litter, recycling operations, and municipal budgets and make recommendations to address them.

The proposed deposit system is a proven model: ten states, covering about 90 million people, have long standing, successful beverage container deposit programs. Data indicate that programs with at least a 10-cent refundable deposit recover as much as 90 percent of used beverage containers for reuse or recycling—nearly four times Maryland’s current beverage container recycling rate. When program targets are achieved, it will generate an additional 11,300 tons of aluminum, 44,000 tons of PET plastic, 3,200 tons of HDPE plastic, and 140,900 tons of glass materials to be recycled into new containers.

The approach that SB0342 proposes is cost effective as it leverages beverage industry funding to launch and maintain the program, avoiding increased costs for the government, and provides an incentive for consumers to maximize recycling. Moreover, it would reduce the costs of collecting, recycling, landfilling and incinerating beverage containers for governments and consumers, provide high quality, food-grade recycled content that can be made into new containers, stimulate regional recycling markets, improve water quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and energy use, and drive investments in refillable and reusable beverage container systems and create jobs, as recycling programs generate five times more jobs than landfilling.

For these reasons, NNWB endorses SB0342 and asks that the committee return a favorable report and support its passage in the Senate and General Assembly. SB0342 is a win-win and a positive return on investment for governments, consumers and producers.

Thank you for considering NNWB’s comments on this important measure.

Sincerely,

Deborah Briceland-Betts
President, Neighbors of the Northwest Branch
www.neighborsnwb.org