

Bill: SB342: Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter  
Reduction Program

Hearing Date: February 10, 2026

Bill Sponsor: Senators Brook, Augustine, Guzzone, Hettleman, Kagan, Love, Muse, Smith, and  
A. Washington

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Submitting Organization: The Green Team of St John The Evangelist Roman Catholic Church

Position: Favorable

Dear Chair and Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing our testimony today in support of SB342. The Green Team at St. John the Evangelist Roman Catholic (SJERC) Church in Columbia, Maryland, urges this committee to vote favorably on the "Bottle Bill." Our group's mission is to care for God's creation as instructed by Catholic social teaching. To that end, our activities include planting trees and gardens, educating ourselves and our communities about environmental issues, and engaging in advocacy. We are providing written testimony today in strong support of SB342, which would greatly reduce plastic and litter pollution that would protect our waterways and our Chesapeake Bay.

As you know, Beverage container deposit programs are a proven and very effective method for increasing recycling, reducing litter and creating a cleaner and more valuable recycling stream. In other states that have instituted these programs, they have achieved recovery rates of nearly 90%, a significant improvement from the 35% achieved by municipal recycling programs. Previous beverage deposit programs in the 60s and 70s worked quite well. With new technology such as the reverse vending machines, the program will be easier and even more effective and would significantly reduce our state's waste.

This proposal has been around a bit and so the details on how this program would operate have been satisfactorily worked out to address earlier concerns. The program would:

- set a deposit level that will motivate the public to change behavior;
- have beverage producers take responsibility for financing and implementation with significant oversight from MD Department of Environment;
- promote development of reusable/refillable beverage container systems;
- would pay for itself, including the MDE oversight.

The benefits of this bill are immense in reducing our beverage container litter and plastic pollution, increasing water quality, quadrupling our beverage recycling rates, reducing greenhouse gases, saving taxpayers and local governments money, and creating jobs.

It is time to pass this law and move forward on the protection of Maryland's environment and our people.

The Green Team of SJERC Church strongly supports SB342 and urges a FAVORABLE report in Committee.