



HOUSE BILL 331

Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program

February 11, 2026

Position: Unfavorable

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

The Restaurant Association of Maryland opposes HB 331. This legislation would require beverage distributors to include a redeemable beverage container refund value as part of the wholesale price of beverage containers sold to restaurants, bars, and other retailers. The legislation prohibits restaurants, bars and other “on-premises sellers” from including the refund value of redeemable beverage containers in the retail price when sold to customers.

Despite language in the bill that allows on-premises sellers to arrange for pickup of empty redeemable beverage containers (with refunds and materials handling fee paid) by a beverage container stewardship organization or via bag drops, many concerns remain about the related logistics for on-premises sellers.

Convenient redemption options for on-premises sellers located in less-populated areas of the state may be limited. Moreover, restaurants and bars in locations with limited outside storage space (such as downtown/city areas) or in properties with shared disposal facilities (e.g., shopping centers, malls, sports/entertainment venues, the airport, etc.) would face challenges separately storing their beverage containers for pickup and ensuring that the correct on-premises seller receives the refunds. These businesses would also need to secure any such storage areas to guard against theft.

For on-premises sellers that are unable to overcome related logistical challenges, the container deposit paid to wholesalers would ultimately amount to an unavoidable tax.

For these reasons, we oppose HB 331 and request an unfavorable report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melvin R. Thompson".

Melvin R. Thompson
Senior Vice President
Government Affairs and Public Policy