

## **Support HB 331**

I am writing in support of HB 331, the Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program bill, more easily called the Bottle Bill.

As I travel around the state, I see so much litter on the sides of roads, park paths and waterways, much of which is beverage containers. Approximately 5.5 billion beverage containers are sold in Maryland each year. Only about one fourth of these containers are recycled, with more than 4 million containers going to the landfill or on our roads and waterways. Over half of the beverage containers are plastic bottles that threaten the health of humans and wildlife. Plastic bottles break into smaller and smaller pieces (microplastics) that are ingested by wildlife as well as us. Scientists estimate that we consume about a credit cards worth of plastic each week.

Microplastics have significant negative impact on health, not just in humans, but in wildlife and aquatic life. They are taken up into plants that we eat. In humans microplastics lead to inflammation, cancer, infertility, low birth weight, low IQ among others (<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12848325/>). These same effects can be seen in wildlife and marine life. Oysters, a major source of jobs on the eastern shore, that ingest microplastics have lower growth and reproduction.

HB 331 is a first step in reducing the litter problem in Maryland. This program will create a 10-to 15-cent refundable deposit on metal, glass, and plastic beverage containers, depending on container size. The deposit is refunded to the customer when the beverage container is returned for recycling. The program would rely on reverse vending machines and other new technologies for convenient container redemption to achieve at least a 90% recovery rate. More information on the bottle bill can be found at <https://www.sierraclub.org/maryland/zero-waste>.

There is not a budget impact from this program as the beverage container deposits will cover the cost of the program.

Currently, there are 10 states that have bottle bills since as early as 1977. Each of these states has seen a dramatic decline in beverage container litter and 30-64% reduction in total litter (<https://www.bottlebill.org/index.php/benefits-of-bottle-bills/litter-studies-in-bottle-bill-states>).

I urge you to support this important bill. Maryland needs and deserves it.