



February 9, 2026

Committee: Environment and Transportation

Testimony on: HB0331—Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS) strongly supports HB0331. Beverage Container Return programs have been shown to reduced beverage container litter by as much as 84%, while increasing recycling rates of beverage containers up to 90%. Recycling also keeps beverage containers out of the waste stream, resulting in savings for municipalities and counties.

As can be seen along any road, beverage containers make up a large part of roadside litter. According to the Container Recycling Institute, numerous studies in many states have shown that beverage containers make up a large proportion of litter, and states with bottle bills have less litter.¹

We are particularly concerned about plastic beverage containers. Plastic pollution is a serious threat to birds. Bottles break down into smaller bits, which birds mistake for food, which can block their digestive system, while the chemicals from plastics can disrupt kidney and endocrine systems.

HB0331 will reduce litter, including plastic bottles, which will also benefit our declining bird populations. It will also markedly improve the recycling feedstock, increasing its value, and promoting proper recycling.

North America has lost almost 30% of its birds since 1970.² We must reduce threats to our declining bird populations, and this bill, HB0331, will help reduce the threat to birds of plastic pollution.

We urge the Committee to issue a favorable report for HB0331, to reduce litter, promote recycling, and protect our declining birds.

Kurt R. Schwarz
Conservation Chair Emeritus

Maryland Ornithological Society
www.mdbirds.org

¹ Container Recycling Institute, Bottle Bill Resource Guide,
<https://www.bottlebill.org/index.php/benefits-of-bottle-bills/bottle-bills-prevent-litter>

² Rosenberg, Kenneth V. et al, Decline of the North American avifauna, Science, VOL 366, NO. 6451, 19 September 2019,
https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.aaw1313?adobe_mc=MCORGID%3D242B6472541199F70A4C98A6%2540AdobeOrg%7CTS%3D1707754028