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MAYOR

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Annapolis, Maryland 21401*

SB342

February 11, 2026

TO: Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee

FROM: Nina Themelis, Director, Mayor's Office of Government Relations

RE: House Bill 331 – Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 331.

HB331 establishes the Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program to increase reuse and recycling of beverage containers. By providing the infrastructure for the stewardship of beverage containers, this bill supports local governments with meeting waste reduction goals and preventing post-consumer waste from entering the environment, especially our waterways. Beverage containers covered under the bill include glass, aluminum and plastic bottles. The bill specifies a goal to achieve a 90% redemption rate in the first decade of implementation. This equates to an astounding 5.2 billion single-use beverage containers that can be diverted from waste streams across Maryland. Though the exact number that would benefit Baltimore City is not known, this target will have significant impacts on the city's waste management strategies that divert and prevent waste. HB331 holds the prospect of reducing the cost of litter and beverage containers collection, recycling and disposal currently imposed on Baltimore City taxpayers.

Programming outlined in the bill also aligns with a goal in the 2019 Sustainability Plan to in our Waste and Recycling, Water in the Environment, and waste reduction goals in Mayor Scott's Term 1 Action Plan.

Waste and Recycling Chapter

- Strategy 1: Pursue legislative and policy changes to reduce the waste stream.
 - Action 1: Enact legislation to impose a fee for plastic bags, and support state legislation instituting beverage container deposits.

- Action 3: Create and implement a plan to achieve zero waste, meaning we “are working toward or diverting over 90 percent of our discards from landfilling or incineration.” Ensure extensive outreach and a plan that addresses the needs of the entire population.

Water in the Environment Chapter

- Strategy 2: Improve aquatic habitats by increasing riparian restoration and water quality monitoring, and creating policies to eliminate sources of pollution.
- Action 4: Develop and promote legislation and policy at the City and State level to reduce pollution of our waterways, including restricting the use of pesticides and herbicides and reducing the use of single-use plastics (such as plastic bags and beverage bottles).

Non-recyclable materials like plastic bags, polystyrene containers, and beverage containers make up as much as half of the litter polluting local streets and waterways. In 2018, the City Council passed a ban on polystyrene containers for carryout food and drinks by a unanimous vote, the Baltimore City Public School Board voted to phase out Styrofoam trays from school cafeterias in favor of compostable trays and in October 2021 Baltimore City passed a plastic bag ban.

A 2020 [litter characterization study](#) conducted by Keep America Beautiful found that an estimated 75% of litter nationally stems from fast food items such as paper cups, paper bags, or other food-related paper products and the remaining 25% of litter consists of plastic items – including plastic bottles, wrappers, utensils or other plastic food ware. Though many single-use items are utilized by consumer for minutes – disposable cups, plastic bags and bottles, can persist in our environment for decades, even centuries. Non-recyclable materials ranging from plastic bags to polystyrene containers, and beverage containers make up as much as half of the litter polluting local streets and waterways. These realities help frame solutions designed to curb litter across our city.

These bills have proven themselves to be effective waste prevention, behavior change and zero waste planning tools for local governments. An estimated 80% reduction in foam containers and 70% reduction in plastic bags were observed during waste sorts conducted among the family of Trash Wheels across the city.

Funding outlined in this bill poses two reimbursement schemes that may warrant additional review to support municipalities that collect recycling and haul to a private MRF to be processed. However, when implemented, the proposed bottle bill will help regulate post-consumer waste across the state, aid local governments with litter prevention/reduction allowing Maryland to shift from waste as a liability to waste as an asset; a way to create good paying, local jobs tied to a workforce development pipeline.

For these reasons, the BCA respectfully requests a **favorable** report on HB331.