



Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Testimony in Support of HB 331 - Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program The Maryland Bottle Bill

TO: Chair Korman and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee
And Chair Valderrama and Members of the Economic Matter Committee
FROM: Phil Webster, PhD, Lead Advocate for the Climate
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland.
DATE: February 10, 2026

The Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland (UULM-MD) strongly supports **HB 331- Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program - The Maryland Bottle Bill**. We are a faith-based advocacy organization based on Unitarian Universalist (UU) Values, including Interdependence (honoring the interdependent web of all existence) and Justice (where all feel welcome and can thrive). Working to mitigate, adapt to, and build resilience for climate change is central to our beliefs.

The Maryland Bottle Bill aligns with both of the values by:

- a) Reducing the amount of carbon pollution by heavily supporting recycling in Maryland,
- b) Saving local jurisdictions money by diverting a waste stream away from expensive landfills,
- c) Reducing litter which tends to accumulate in lower and moderate income areas.

The Maryland Bottle Bill is a very sensible legislation. It is an easy, straightforward solution to reduce plastic pollution and greenhouse gas emissions by reducing the energy needed to produce new beverage containers. The bill includes beverage containers that are bottles, cans, or other containers, but excludes cartons, pouches, or aseptic packaging.

Beverage container deposit programs are a proven, highly effective policy for recovering used beverage containers and reducing litter. This bill would create a beverage container program in Maryland with a refundable deposit, depending on the size of the container. The deposit is refunded to the customer when the bottle is returned and is estimated to achieve a 90% return rate - up from a 25% rate today.

The performance targets for the program are:

- 1) 70% beverage container redemption rate by December 31, 2030;
- 2) 90% redemption rate by December 31, 2033;
- 3) Attainment of all convenience standards identified by the MD Department of the Environment by December 31, 2028,
- 4) At least 10% of all beverage containers sold in the state are returned and refilled by December 31, 2038,

UULM-MD c/o UU Church of Annapolis 333 Dubois Road Annapolis, MD 21401 410-266-8044,

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This program would be self-funded from fees paid by producers, revenue from the sale of raw materials, unclaimed deposits, and penalties. While the state and counties are grappling with extremely tight budgets, the program established by the bill would not cost the state at all and would relieve counties and ultimately the taxpayers from the burden of expensive waste and recycling costs.

Well-designed producer responsibility programs can help us *reduce* our volume of waste, while modern recycling refund programs help us *reuse* and *recycle* a major portion of the packaging waste stream. **The Maryland Bottle Bill** builds upon the legislation that was passed last year, to increase producer responsibility for packaging. **The Maryland Bottle Bill** would provide a high rate of return for containers by creating incentives for the development of refillable and reusable containers. This would create the circular and zero waste economy that will increase the cost-effectiveness of creating zero-waste or reusable containers. Recycling refund programs help capture highly recyclable beverage containers that might otherwise be wasted or become litter and help satisfy the demand for high quality recycled materials.

Beverage container deposit programs are a proven, highly effective solution to recovering used beverage containers and reducing litter. Ten states, covering more than 90 million people, already have longstanding, successful programs.

The State of Maryland needs to protect our waterways and our beloved Chesapeake Bay from plastic pollution and litter. **The Maryland Bottle Bill** will accomplish this goal!

We urge a FAVORABLE report on **SB 331**.

Phil Webster, PhD

Lead Advocate for the Climate UULM-MD

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