



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 11th, 2026

HB331

Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program
Environment and Transportation Committee
Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of **House Bill 331**. The Maryland Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

House Bill 331 establishes a beverage container recycling refund program designed to significantly increase the reuse and recycling of bottles and cans, while also reducing litter, pollution, and cleanup expenses for Maryland communities. By requiring beverage producers to register with the Department of the Environment, contribute a modest fee, and participate in a stewardship organization, the program ensures that producers take on an appropriate share of responsibility for the environmental impacts of the products they bring to market.

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis reminds us that caring for our common home is not optional—it is a moral obligation rooted in gratitude, stewardship, and justice. Today, beverage container waste has become one of the most visible and destructive threats to God's creation. Plastic bottles and aluminum cans fill our rivers and streams, harm wildlife, pollute our neighborhoods, and strain local waste systems. This is not simply an environmental concern but a matter of human dignity and public health, especially for communities already disproportionately burdened by pollution.

As consumption of bottled water and other beverages continues to rise, so does the urgency of meaningful action. Recycling alone is not enough—we must create systems that reduce waste at the source, encourage responsible consumption, and ensure producers share responsibility for the environmental impact of their products. This legislation does exactly that by fostering partnerships with the very industries whose materials contribute to the problem, moving us from reaction to prevention.

Recycling initiatives like this are not just beneficial, they are necessary. They protect our waterways, reduce plastic pollution, conserve resources, and help safeguard the beauty and integrity of our state for future generations. This bill serves as a practical expression of our call to care for creation and a concrete step toward restoring balance, justice, and sustainability in Maryland.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference urges a favorable report on **House Bill 331**.