

Testimony in support of HB0331 — Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program

Environment and Transportation Committee

Hearing Date: 2/11/2026

Position: FAVORABLE

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Raj Awasthi, I'm a Junior at Montgomery Blair High School, and the founder of [BetterPlanet4Kids](#), a youth-led nonprofit dedicated to environmental wellness, youth service, and community-based action to protect our shared public spaces.

I am submitting this testimony in strong support of House Bill 331 and respectfully request a favorable report.

Environmental wellness is not only about the climate and emissions. It's also about the health of the places where we live, learn, and play. As students, we regularly see beverage containers as a major source of litter: bottles and cans on school sidewalks, in parks, and near storm drains. This litter harms neighborhood pride, increases cleanup costs for local governments, and travels through waterways into the Chesapeake Bay watershed, affecting wildlife and water quality.

HB0331 addresses this problem through a proven, common-sense approach: a refundable deposit system that creates a direct incentive to return containers for recycling (and encourages higher reuse over time). Instead of relying only on cleanup after the damage is done, HB0331 focuses on preventing litter at the source.

Through BetterPlanet4Kids, youth volunteers participate in community cleanups and environmental action days. These events matter, but they also reveal an important truth: volunteer cleanups can't keep up with the amount of single-use containers entering the environment. After every cleanup, the same types of bottles and cans reappear because the system currently makes it too easy for containers to become litter.

HB0331 supports the kind of structural change that makes our volunteer efforts more effective and less repetitive. When a container has value, people are far more likely to return it and far less likely to toss it.

HB0331 helps Maryland move toward:

- Cleaner parks, sidewalks, school areas, and waterways
- Higher recycling rates and better-quality recycled materials
- Reduced litter collection burdens and costs

- A culture where producers and consumers share responsibility for waste outcomes

This bill aligns with what young people are asking for: practical policies that improve environmental health in real, visible ways.

Overall, HB0331 is an opportunity to reduce litter, strengthen recycling, and protect Maryland's environment for the next generation. And for these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on HB0331.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,
[Raj Awasthi](#)

Montgomery Blair High School (STEM Magnet Program), Class of 2027

Host: YouthRUs Podcast ([Spotify](#), [YouTube](#))

Founder & CEO; [BetterPlanet4Kids](#)

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