



Maryland Native Plant Society

APPRECIATION CONSERVATION EDUCATION

Testimony: HB331, Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program
Committee: Environment and Transportation
Hearing Date: February 11, 2026
Position: FAVORABLE

Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and honorable members of the Committee:

The Maryland Native Plant Society supports HB331, which establishes a program to increase the reuse and recycling of beverage containers, reduce litter and pollution, and reduce costs associated with both. Every beverage container that ends its life in a recycling facility is one fewer that can become litter. Litter, whether intentional or accidental, is a serious threat to Maryland's native plants and the wildlife that depend on them.

Bottle deposit programs are historically effective in motivating residents to police and properly dispose of container waste. A 2021 survey of litter across the United States¹ found that in states with bottle deposit programs, bottle deposit materials were left in waterways less than half as frequently (per capita) in those states, and even non-deposit materials were found less frequently.

We are particularly concerned about the proper disposal of plastic bottles, whose decomposition releases plastic particles that are essentially impossible to eliminate once they have infiltrated aquatic and soil environments. A growing body of research² is showing plastic particles change soil structure, reduce soil fertility, can impair or kill soil microbes (essential for plant health), impact root growth. When plastic particles break down small enough, they can be taken up directly by plants, which both impacts their growth and transfers that plastic to the herbivores that eat them (including humans).

These microscopic changes can ultimately disrupt whole plant communities, which can only further imperil our rare, threatened, and endangered (RTE) plants in Maryland.

This effort to keep litter properly contained and out of our soils and waterways has our support and we ask for a favorable report on this bill.

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References:

¹ [Keep America Beautiful 2020 National Litter Study Report](#), p. 72, March 2021

² Noreen Khalid, Muhammad Aqeel, Ali Noman, [Microplastics could be a threat to plants in terrestrial systems directly or indirectly](#), Environmental Pollution, Volume 267, 2020