



**MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL OF LAUREL, MARYLAND
OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL
COUNCILMAN JAMES KOLE**

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February 28, 2026

Maryland House Environment and Transportation Committee
250 Taylor House Office Building
251 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Letter of Support for HB331 and SB342 - Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program

Dear Distinguished Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 331 and Senate Bill 342, collectively known as the Maryland Bottle Bill. As a representative of the City of Laurel and Chairman of the City of Laurel's Environmental Affairs Committee, I believe this legislation represents a critical step forward in our state's commitment to waste reduction and recycling.

The proposed Bottle Bill will establish a comprehensive deposit-refund system for beverage containers, creating a powerful economic incentive for recycling. By implementing a modest deposit on beverage containers, we will:

- Dramatically increase recycling rates across Maryland
- Reduce plastic waste in our natural environments, including the Chesapeake Bay
- Create economic opportunities through improved recycling infrastructure
- Encourage consumer behavior that prioritizes environmental responsibility

Current recycling rates for beverage containers in Maryland are dismally low, with an estimated 70% of these containers ending up in landfills or as litter. This bill will transform that trajectory by providing a clear financial motivation for consumers to return their containers.

The economic model is both simple and effective: consumers pay a small deposit when purchasing beverages, which is fully refundable upon container return. This system has proven successful in numerous states and countries, consistently achieving recycling rates above 90%.

Moreover, the bill includes provisions to support small businesses and ensure the system is equitable and accessible to all Maryland residents. Redemption centers, reverse vending machines, and convenient return options will be established to make recycling easy and convenient.

As a local elected official committed to sustainability, I urge the committee to advance HB331 and SB342 with the amendments proposed by the Maryland Municipal Leage (MML) that read as follows:

Amendment – Section 9-1757 - Redemption Facility Location and Municipal Exemption

(a) The Department of the Environment shall determine the locations for redemption facilities based on objective criteria, including but not limited to geographic accessibility, service efficiency, economic viability, and environmental impact, with the purpose of optimizing statewide operation of the beverage container redemption program.



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(b) No municipality shall be required, as a condition of the beverage container redemption program, to host, operate, or provide land, facilities, or any other resources for the establishment or operation of any redemption facility.

(c) Prior to finalizing the locations of redemption facilities, the Department shall consult with affected municipalities to consider any potential impacts on municipal services and existing recycling programs, and to ensure that the selected sites do not impose undue burdens on local jurisdictions.

(d) The Department is authorized to enter into agreements with private or other state-operated entities for the establishment and operation of redemption facilities, thereby preserving municipal autonomy over local waste management and recycling operations.

This legislation represents a pragmatic, market-driven approach to environmental stewardship that will benefit our state for generations to come.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Kole".

James Kole
Councilmember - City of Laurel