

Maryland Bottle Bill Momentum in 2025!



Presentation for the COG Recycling Committee

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Martha Ainsworth, Chair

Maryland Sierra Club Zero Waste Team

Martha.Ainsworth@mdsierra.org

The problem:



Berlin, Worcester County

- Only about a quarter of the 5.5 billion beverage containers sold in MD annually are captured for recycling. More than 4 billion annually are left in the environment (landfilled or littered) or incinerated
- The Anacostia and Baltimore harbor watersheds are regulated by the EPA for trash!
- Unsightly litter; perpetual clean-ups; wasted resources; greenhouse gas emissions,
- Plastic containers in the environment break down into microplastics, a threat to wildlife and human health



Anacostia River Trash Trap



Baltimore Harbor

The solution:

The Maryland Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program

(a.k.a., the Maryland Bottle Bill)



Objective: To reduce litter and plastic pollution

Sponsors: Del. Jen Terrasa and Sen. Benjamin Brooks

How the program works

A small deposit is added to the price of beverages in glass, plastic, and metal containers



**10-cent deposit for
containers \leq 24 fl. oz.**



**15-cent deposit for
containers $>$ 24 fl. oz and $<$ 3 liters**

Deposits are refunded when the containers are returned for recycling

- Consumers may obtain a refund when they return the containers to a retailer or redemption facility for recycling



“Clynk” bag drop



Reverse vending machine

- Restaurants, bars, hotels, and large venues where customers consume beverages “on premises” obtain a refund when the empty containers are picked up by the program.

Main features of the program

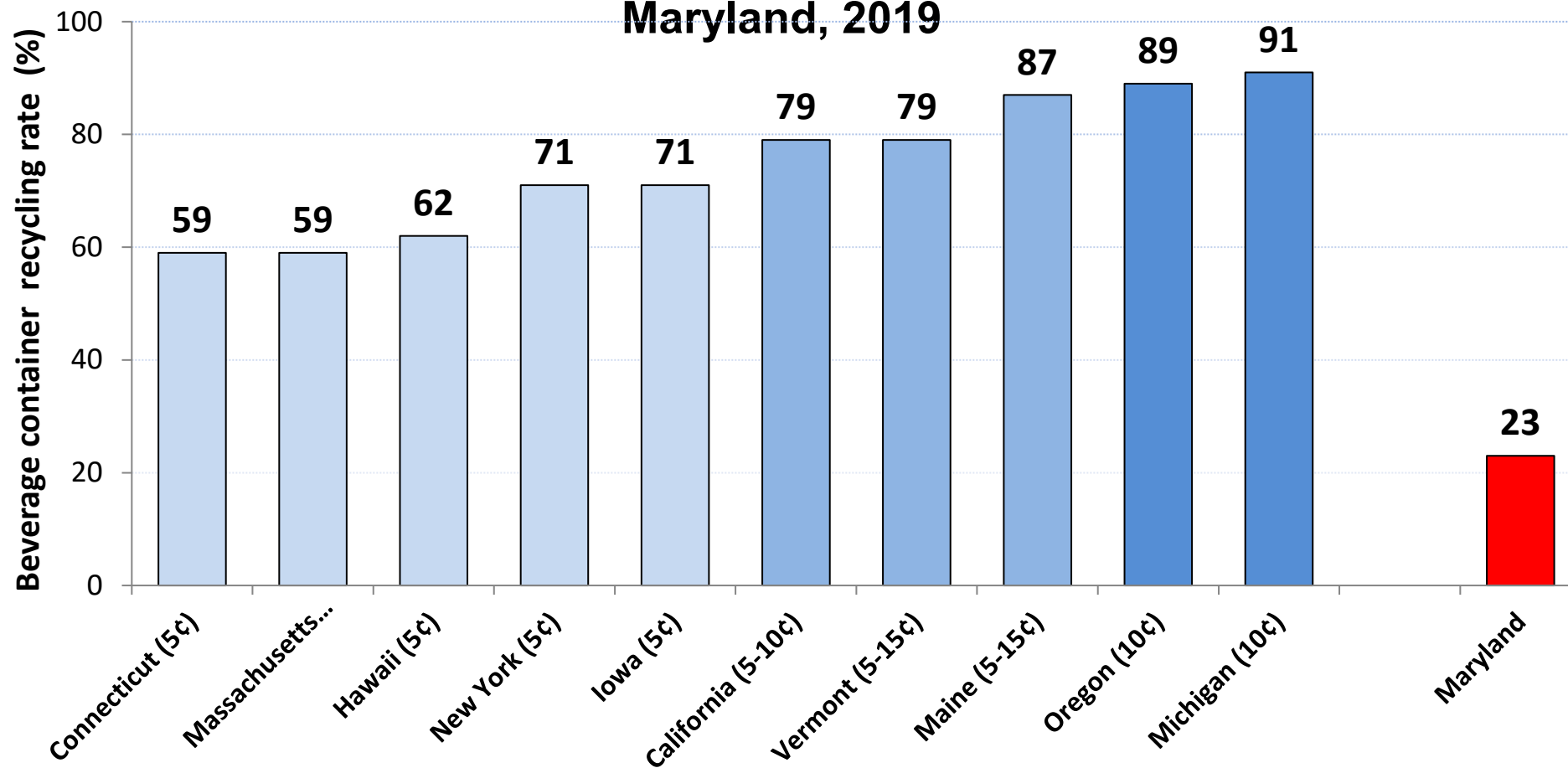
- **Redemption options:** Mainly return-to-retail, flexibility for retailers
- **Implemented by beverage producers,** in a single nonprofit Stewardship Organization (SO)
- **Enforceable target:** 90% redemption rate in 5 yrs, penalties for shortfall
- **Strong oversight from MD Department of the Environment (MDE)**
 - Sets the convenience standards, handling fees, producer registration fees
 - Selects the SO, approves 5-year Stewardship Plan & annual reports. Advisory Council of stakeholders.
 - May increase the deposit and expand covered containers under certain circumstances
 - Enforces and audits operations
- **Self-financed** by registration and producer fees, sale of raw materials, unredeemed deposits, and penalties. All MDE oversight is financed by SO.
- **Unredeemed deposits:** In a separate account that may only be used to improve the program;
- **Grant program** for reuse: up to \$5 million/year of unredeemed deposits
- **Effective date:** 2 ½ years after approval (e.g., January 2028)



The impacts!

**Recovery of $\geq 90\%$ of beverage containers,
3.6 billion fewer wasted containers per year**

**Recycling rates (%) for covered beverage containers in deposit states vs.
Maryland, 2019**



Reduction in litter, plastic pollution, improved water quality



- Beverage containers, by volume, are half or more of the trash in trash traps along the Anacostia watershed. Most are plastic
- Would remove 236,000 tons of plastic, aluminum, and glass containers from the environment, including about 2.3 BILLION plastic bottles.

Increased availability of high-quality, food-grade recycled materials, displacing production using virgin stock



Deposit recycled glass



Single-stream glass

- Increased availability of materials for post-consumer content, reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- Enables of bottle-to-bottle closed-loop production

Job creation

- The increase in tonnage recycled creates jobs!

At least five times more jobs are created in collection, sorting, and transporting from increased recycling than in garbage collection, hauling, and landfilling

- Use of reverse vending machines and new sorting technology will develop high-tech jobs in manufacturing and servicing the machines
- New jobs will be created by investments in the reuse/refill systems



Savings for local governments

- **Cost savings from reduced municipal solid waste (trash and recycling), paid for by producers***
 - Savings in collection, transport, tipping fees for the $\frac{3}{4}$ of beverage containers currently trashed/burned
 - Savings in collection transport, and processing of beverage containers for recycling
 - Reduced costs for litter removal
- **For local governments that operate a MRF:**
 - Compensation for any net losses from waste management attributable to the program
 - Diversion of glass bottles from curbside programs
- **Local governments may set up their own redemption facilities and receive a handling fee per container**

* Studies across the globe have found that reduction in disposal costs more than compensates for any lost revenue from high-value recyclables.

Momentum in the 2025 General Assembly!

The Bottle Bill passed the House Environment and Transportation Committee, 17-6. A VERY BIG DEAL!

- Introduced in the House (HB232) and Senate (SB346)
- **Statewide poll** showed 90% of registered voters support a bottle bill, 95% concerned about the impacts of plastic pollution on human health and the environment
- **Amendments to HB232:**
 - Local governments have no responsibility for redemption centers or enforcement
 - MRFs to be reimbursed by the SO for collection, transportation, & processing of unredeemed redeemable containers they collect.
- **Maryland Municipal League** endorsed the bill
- Sent to House Economic Matters Committee, which declined to hold a vote. Senate Committee had a hearing.



Del. Terrasa and partners , bottle bill retreat, May 2025

Headwinds in 2026

- The Economic Matters Committee will be difficult to sway
- 2026 is an election year

BUT ...

- The Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging bill (SB901)
 - Acknowledges a separate, complementary bottle bill to reduce litter & plastic pollution
 - Will subsidize recycling service providers (MRFs, local gov'ts) for 90% of collection, transportation, and processing costs of recycling packaging by 2030
- The public is very concerned about litter and the impact of plastic pollution on human health and the environment.

We are not going to let up on the pressure!



Mr. Trash Wheel dumpster dive, Waterfront Partnership of Baltimore, November 2024



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Maryland Needs a BOTTLE BILL!



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