



## Senate Bill 684

### *Maryland Redeemable Beverage Container and Litter Reduction Program*

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs  
Committee

Date: March 10, 2014

From: Leslie Knapp, Jr.

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** SB 684. The bill would create a statewide container deposit of five cents, to be redeemed through a series of redemption centers. The complex fiscal and operational underpinnings of the bill leave counties absorbing the long-term loss of key recycling revenue and the new redemption infrastructure could upend Maryland's already very successful efforts to promote citizen acceptance of and participation in recycling efforts.

Maryland has debated, and rejected, various proposals to institute container deposits over the years. According to the Container Recycling Institute, only 10 states currently implement a beverage container deposit program. Delaware repealed its deposit program in 2010 when it created a statewide recycling requirement instead. Vermont is among the 10 states with a container program, but it also recently adopted a statewide recycling requirement and is studying the impact the recycling program will have on its container program. California's program has faced serious fiscal issues.

#### **Diversion of Material from County Recycling Programs**

MACo appreciates the efforts of this year's bill to address county concerns and while it is true that counties are not responsible for overseeing the program or running redemption centers, a core issue remains: the loss of the most valuable recyclable commodity from county recycling programs.

Counties already strive to deliver successful recycling programs, to satisfy both public demand and State mandates. The sale of collected materials is a component toward paying for this service – but counties are obliged to support recycling programs through a wide range of general taxes and fees. By withdrawing the most marketable commodities from existing recycling programs (curbside pickup, single stream, etc.), SB 684 would orphan the massive infrastructure investment made in these programs, as well as oblige even larger taxpayer subsidies to cover costs for a reduced material stream.

As the bill's fiscal note indicates, local recycling revenues will decrease, potentially significantly, beginning in 2017 when the deposit program takes effect. Montgomery County estimates an annual loss of \$1.3 million from diverted scrap material.

While the bill does provide for a nominal subsidy to offset these losses, that subsidy is deliberately only temporary. After that, counties are left on their own to make up the losses. Also, as the fiscal note indicates, it is unclear whether the subsidy would entirely cover county losses (MACo believes it will only be a partial offset) and that the subsidy will not cover any other costs incurred by a jurisdiction to alter its local waste disposal and recycling programs.

### **Impact on Consumer Behavior**

Maryland has accomplished much through citizen education and program investments to reach its outcomes. Single-stream recycling programs continue to prove popular and accessible to residential users, and remain the widespread direction of county-managed efforts.

MACo is concerned about the effect a container deposit program will have on citizen behavior that has been trained towards a single-stream model. As the past has shown, significant education efforts will be needed to alter citizen behavior and there could be a dilution of enthusiasm in participating in single stream programs. Existing bottle deposit programs were instituted prior to large-scale recycling programs and cannot provide reliable guidance about potential impacts.

### **Litter Reduction**

MACo acknowledges that the litter issue raised by advocates of the bottle deposit program is a valid concern. However, MACo believes that the issue can most likely be addressed through other methods that would not potentially disrupt Maryland's recycling efforts.

Attached with this testimony are a series of web links that highlight different litter reduction and prevention approaches undertaken by other jurisdictions. MACo tried to select programs that took different approaches and have had some level of success. While no single approach will solve the litter issue, the programs can provide some viable alternatives to the container deposit proposal.

### **Conclusion**

SB 684 would impose a controversial and unpopular charge on consumers and undermine successful recycling efforts. The bill would divert scrap material used to subsidize county recycling programs and potentially confuse the efforts to focus residents on single stream recycling. For these reasons, MACo recommends an **UNFAVORABLE** report on SB 684.

## LITTER REDUCTION PROGRAMS

(Prepared by MACo 2015-03-04)

### **Virginia**

State Litter Prevention Program: distribution of annual grants to localities for recycling and litter activities, provide information

<http://www.deq.virginia.gov/Programs/LandProtectionRevitalization/RecyclingandLitterPreventionPrograms.aspx>

<http://cvwma.com/cvwma-education/litter-prevention/>

### **Pennsylvania**

Great American Clean-Up of Pennsylvania Program

[http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/illegal\\_dumping/14084/litter\\_program/589635](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/illegal_dumping/14084/litter_program/589635)

### **Delaware**

Summarizes several litter prevention events in the state

<http://www.delawarehealth.org/content.cfm?article=annual-events>

### **Ohio**

State Litter Prevention Grants

<http://epa.ohio.gov/ocapp/grants.aspx>

City of Mansfield Litter Prevention and Recycling Program

<http://ci.mansfield.oh.us/index.php/litter-control>

### **San Diego**

Work of the nonprofit group I Love A Clean San Diego

[http://ilacsd.org/a\\_strategies.php](http://ilacsd.org/a_strategies.php)

### **Britain**

Keep Britain Tidy campaign (corporate partnerships)

<http://www.keepbritaintidy.org/litterpreventioncommitment/1376>