

# A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Beverage Container Deposit Program for Maryland's Economy and Environment

COG Recycling Committee  
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Maryland Chapter

# Question:

## *What program would...*

- *Triple the recycling rate for beverage containers?*
- *Reduce litter by as much as two-thirds?*
- *Reduce the costs to taxpayers of trash and recycling collection, landfilling, and incineration?*
- *Improve water quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, save energy, and reuse valuable resources?*
- *Raise property values and promote tourism?*
- *Increase the income of the destitute and help charities raise funds?*

*While NOT raising taxes or government deficits?*

**Answer:**

**The Maryland Redeemable  
Beverage Container  
Recycling Refund and Litter  
Reduction Act!**

(aka the "bottle bill")

# The Problem

- More than 4 billion beverage containers are sold in Maryland every year; only a little more than one billion are actually recycled and reused
- ***3 billion beverage containers are being introduced into Maryland's environment every year – as litter, in landfills, or incinerated – about 500/capita/year!***
- **In Prince George's County, this amounts to 450 million containers annually left in the environment. In Montgomery, 515 million.**

# Great Blue Heron navigating the Anacostia



***Bottles and cans are roughly half of litter collected, by volume, in the Nash Run trash trap***



Source: Anacostia Watershed Society

# Baltimore Harbor



# ***Recyclable Beverage Containers are in the landfill – a waste of valuable resources***

## **Trash sort results for beverage containers, Prince George’s County, 2014-2015**

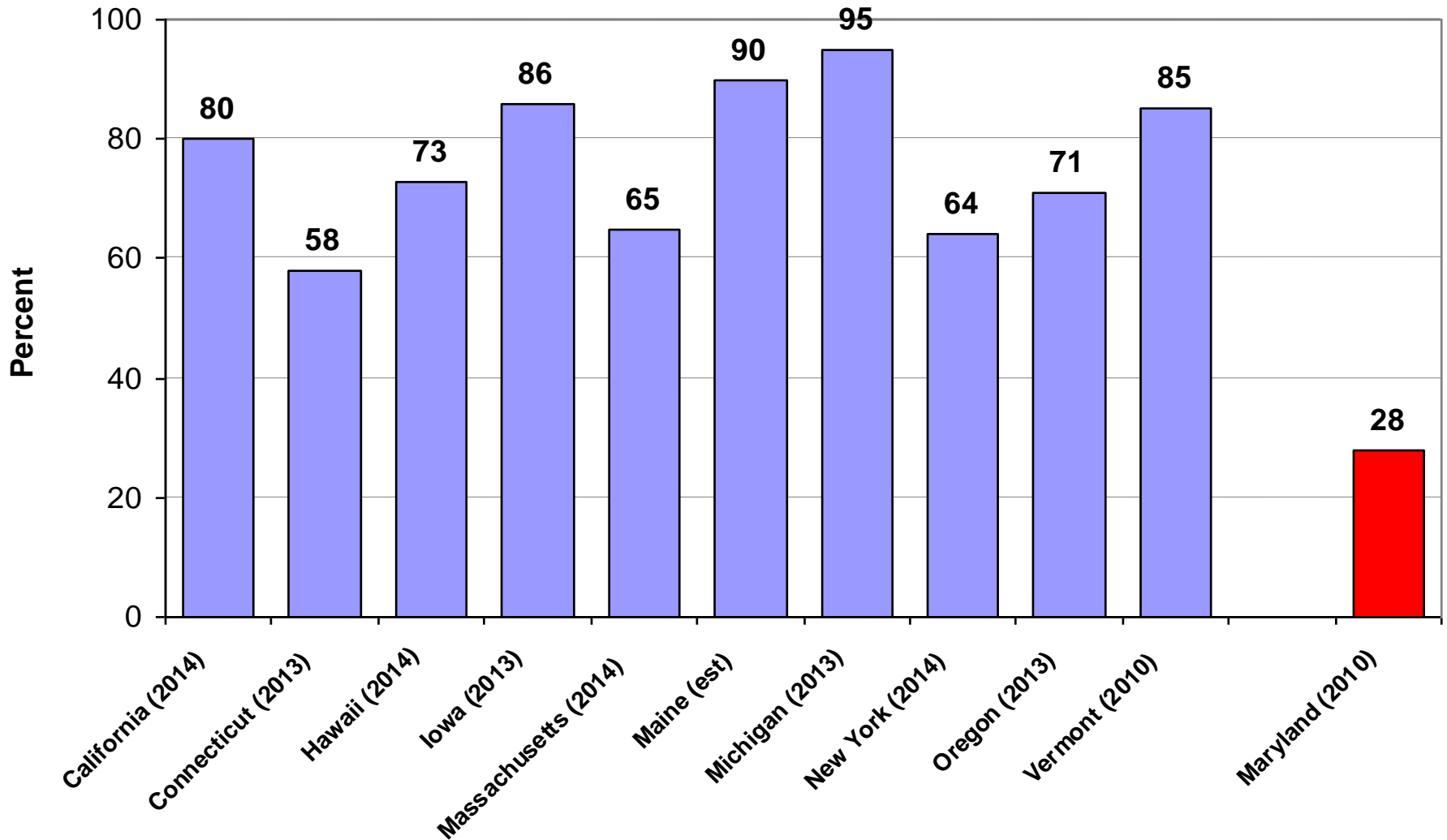
<b>Container type</b>	<b>Percent of solid waste, by weight</b>			<b>Tons delivered to the landfill/year</b>
	<b>Residential</b>	<b>Commercial</b>	<b>Public Schools</b>	
<b>PET bottles</b>	2.0	2.1	3.6	6,300
<b>Aluminum cans, foil</b>	1.0	0.7	2.3	2,700
<b>Glass bottles, jars</b>	3.4	2.3	8.1	9,900
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>14.0</b>	<b>18,900</b>

*Source:* Waste Characterization Study, Summary of Results 2014/2015, Nov. 23, 2015. SCS Engineers, commissioned by the DER, Waste Management Division, Prince George’s County

*Note:* It is likely that a significant amount of commercial waste is disposed of at facilities other than the Brown Station Landfill. No information was available on the share of beverage containers by volume



# Recycling rates for beverage containers are three times higher in states with a deposit! \*



\* Figures are the redemption rate on containers in states with deposits. MD figure is estimate of recycling for all beverage containers.  
Source: Container Recycling Institute.

# How would the Maryland bottle bill work?

- Consumers, retailers, distributors pay a 5-cent refundable deposit on aluminum, glass, and plastic beverage containers, *creating an incentive to recycle & pick up litter*
- Containers are returned to retailers with reverse vending machines or to other redemption centers, and the deposit is refunded.

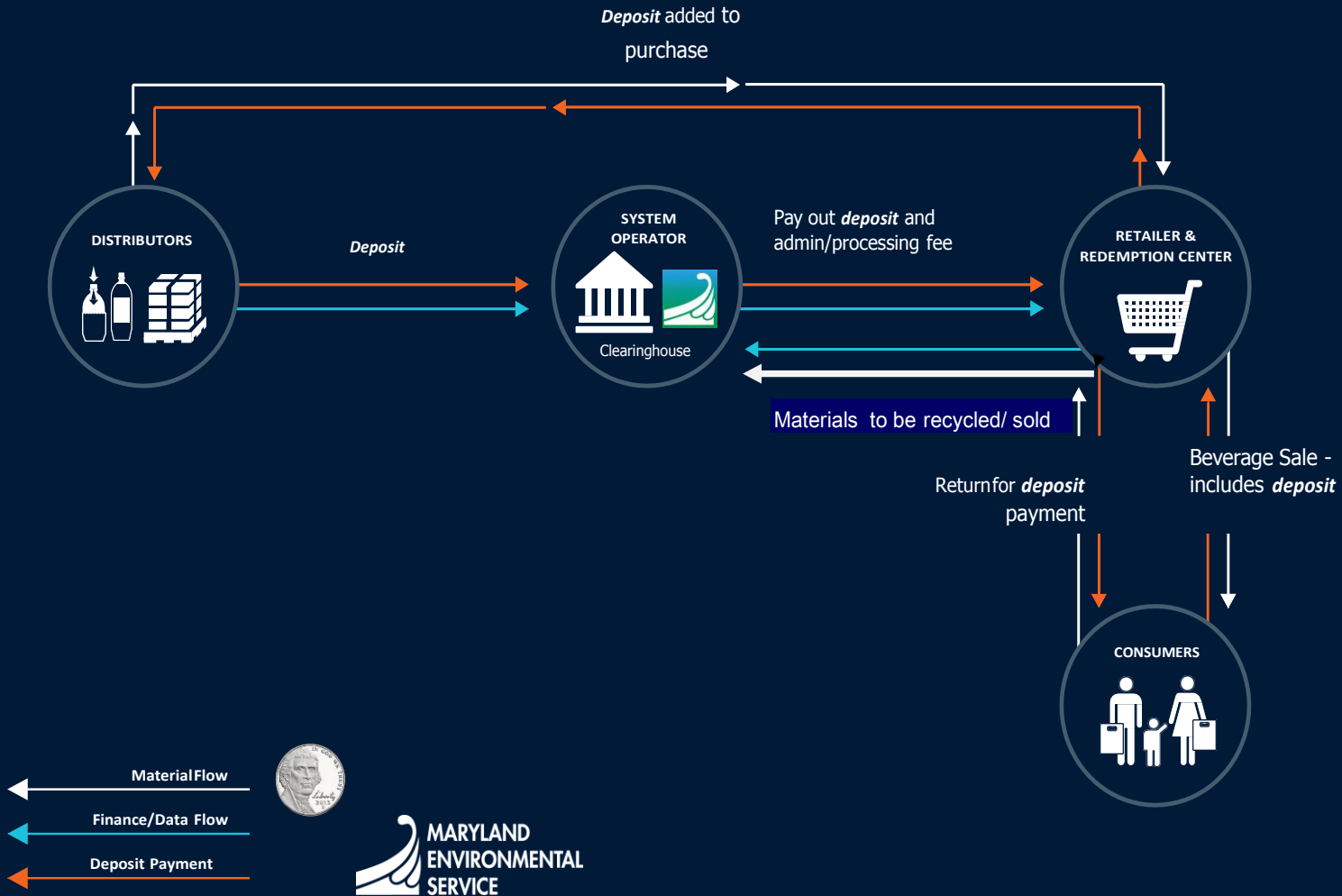


# How would the Maryland bottle bill work? (cont)

- The program would be developed, operated, managed by the Maryland Environmental Service (MES), a self-supporting, not-for-profit independent state agency.
- The containers are collected by MES (primarily) and the materials sold for reuse; distributors get 1/8 cent administrative fee
- Reserve Redeemable Beverage Container Recycling Fund financed by unredeemed deposits and scrap materials to ensure long-run viability of program
- Legislative review after the first three years
- **The program is entirely self-financing through unredeemed deposits and sale of scrap materials!**

*Exemptions: Dairy, wine containers; Retailers <5,000 sf of retail space not obligated to accept returns; Bulk redemption possible for large public venues (e.g., stadiums)*

# MATERIAL AND FINANCIAL FLOWS IN THE MARYLAND DEPOSIT REFUND SYSTEM



# What are the benefits?

## ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

- *Tripling of Maryland's container recycling rate to >70%*
- *Substantial reduction of litter and its environmental impacts (Container litter by 69-84%; Overall litter by 1/3-2/3)*
- *Reduction in greenhouse gases and wasted energy (Saving of 4 trillion BTUs of wasted energy/year – enough to power 45,000 homes; 215,000 tons of GHG emissions prevented)*
- *\$2 million annually to the Chesapeake Bay Trust*
- *\$15 million over 3 years for Total Max Daily Load (TMDL) issues as mandated by the EPA*
- *\$21 million over 3 years for MDE for community environmental grants*

## **ECONOMIC BENEFITS**

- *Self-financed, doesn't require public funds, taxes*
- *Cost savings to counties & municipalities, state*
  - *Reduced costs of litter removal, trash and recyclable collection, landfilling, incineration: REDUCED BURDEN TO TAXPAYERS*
  - *Less contaminated single-stream recycling will fetch higher prices*
  - *\$27 million over 3 years for documented losses claimed by curbside recycling programs & materials recycling facilities verified by MES*
- *Creation of estimated 800 new full-time equivalent jobs (directly), an equal number indirectly*
- *Sale and re-use of valuable materials (136,000 tons of glass, 15,000 tons of aluminum, 42,000 tons of PET & HDPE plastic in 2010)*
- *Income for the indigent, fundraising tool for charities*
- *Increase in property values & tourism from less litter*

**We don't want a study,  
we want action!**

**Every year we wait, another 3 billion containers enter the environment!**



**There is plenty of experience with these programs in 10 states over 40+ years!**



**If not this program, then how will we remove these containers from the environment?**



**DO THE RIGHT THING FOR THE PEOPLE AND  
THE ENVIRONMENT!**

**SUPPORT THIS BILL!**