

Summary of 3 Environmental Bills in the 2025 MD State Legislature

CHERISH Act – Cumulative Harms to Environmental Restoration for Improving Shared Health (**HB1484/SB978**) https://cleanwater.org/sites/default/files/2025-01/CHERISH%20Act%202025%20Factsheet_English.pdf

Fact sheet for more information.

This is an effort at ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE in PERMITTING (new and renewing) for certain types of facilities. This covers air, land and water permits for facilities such as incinerators, fossil fuel energy-generating facilities, manufacturing facilities, landfills and polluted sites.

It would apply to census tracts that have an Environmental Justice Score of 75 or higher (such as South Baltimore), as determined by MDE, which indicates the area already has a high pollution burden. In these areas, instead of looking at just the pollution for the facility requesting the permit, it would consider the cumulative impacts in the area.

Aligns with Maryland’s Climate Pollution Reduction Plan and MDE’s Climate Implementation Plan, and has broad support from environmental, justice and community groups.

BOTTLE BILL - Beverage Container Recycling Refund & Litter Reduction Program (**HB232/SB346**) https://www.sierraclub.org/sites/default/files/2025-01/beverage-container-recycling-refund-litter-reduction-coalition-fact-sheet_1-20-2025_0.pdf

Fact sheet for more information.

About 5.5 billion beverage containers sold in MD annually! Only about 25% are recycled. The rest go into landfills, are incinerated or littered into our environment. Beverage container deposit programs are a proven, highly effective policy for recovering used beverage containers (glass, plastic and aluminum) and reducing litter. 10 states already have longstanding, successful programs. Those with 10-cent deposits have container recycling rates of 90%!

A small deposit is added to the purchase which is refunded to the customer when the container is returned for recycling (via reverse vending machines or other systems). The program would be operated by a nonprofit organization representing (and funded by) beverage producers in MD, overseen by MDE. It would be self-financing (no state funds needed, so “revenue neutral”).

BETTER BUILDINGS ACT (**HB 0973/SB804**) <https://ccanactionfund.org/media/BBA-Fact-Sheet-2025-1-2.pdf>

Fact sheet for more info.

The Better Buildings Act reduces energy costs and improves public health for Marylanders by requiring *all newly constructed buildings* to meet their space and water heating needs without the use of fossil fuels. By including language that eliminates bias in favor of fossil fuels, this legislation levels the playing field and would encourage the adoption of highly efficient electric equipment such as heat pumps. All-electric new buildings are cheaper to build and operate

than gas powered and dual-fueled buildings in Maryland. These savings apply to single family All homes, multi-family buildings, and commercial buildings.

There are many other environmental bills worth your consideration this session. These 3 were the focus of a webinar sponsored by **Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake (IPC)** and **Interfaith Power & Light (IPL-DC-MD-NoVA)**. TPC is a member congregation of IPC.

All 3 bills have been referred to committees for consideration in both chambers:

CHERISH Act – House Environment & Transportation Committee hearing 3/6, 1 p.m.

Senate Education, Energy & Environment Committee hearing 2/25

Bottle Bill – House Environment & Transportation, Economic Matters committees hearing 2/14

Senate Education, Energy & Environment Committee hearing 2/18

Better Buildings -- House Environment & Transportation Committee hearing 2/26

Senate Education, Energy & Environment Committee hearing 2/27

To check current status of legislation, go here and enter the bill # in the search function.

<https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Legislation/Index/house>

<https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Legislation/Index/senate>

To find your state delegate, state senator and their contact information:

mdelect.net - or -

<https://maryland.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=177afa87a67746a4ac5496b2d0897fb7>

Enter your address and it will list your representatives (at all levels). Click on the person listed and it will take you to their contact information (address, phone, email).

Taking action:

An individual letter, call or email from a constituent will have the most impact. But some of the local environmental groups have also organized lobbying events and online petitions. These organizations are listed as sponsors on the 3 information sheets. There are also links to 3 petitions below. Any and all efforts (individual, group lobbying and online petitions) will have an impact, so it's recommended that you pursue multiple avenues.

Available online petitions for these bills from local environmental groups:

CHERISH ACT – MD League of Conservation Voters

<https://www.mdlc.org/action-alert/the-cherish-act?emci=ffd751a9-d1e3-ef11-90cb-0022482a94f4&emdi=2ea3628f-bce4-ef11-90cb-0022482a94f4&ceid=1313234>

Bottle Bill -- Blue Water Baltimore

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1o76Kc94CG2b5k2AuLekJpTvYKlvQces67WCwyPmDLmY/viewform?edit_requested=true

Bottle Bill – Sierra Club Maryland

<https://addup.sierraclub.org/campaigns/support-the-maryland-bottle-bill-to-reduce-litter-and-plastic-pollution-and-increase-recycling?promoid=701Po00000gY5mmIAC>

(Has sample text you can use/adapt for your own letter to your representatives.)