2026 MD Legislative Environmental Briefing - Summary of Bills

(Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake, Interfaith Power & Light)

Maryland Bottle Bill (repeat from 2025) **HB 0331, SB 0342**

For more info: MD Sierra Club mdbottlebill@mdsierra.org
PETITION - https://act.sierraclub.org/actions/Maryland?actionId=AR0519857

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").

Has been referred to House committees – Environment & Transportation, Economic Matters
Has been referred to Senate committee – Education, Energy, and the Environment

CHERISH Act - Cherish Our Communities. (repeat from 2025)

Cumulative Harms to Environmental Restoration for Improving our Shared Health
SB 0781/HB 1268 (Covers non-energy-generating facilities like incinerators and landfills)
SB 0780/HB 1287 (Covers energy generating facilities like fossil fuel power plants)
For more info: MD League of Conservation Voters https://www.mdlcv.org/2026-priorities

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.

Has been referred to House committees – Environment & Transportation, hearing 3/10 – 1pm
Has been referred to Senate committee – Education, Energy, and the Environment

Affordable Solar Act (new this year) **HB 0345/SB 0341**
For more info. – Chesapeake Climate Action Network (CCAN)
https://www.ccanactionfund.org/maryland/affordable-solar/

This bill does 2 things…
1) Reforms the current incentive program (Solar Renewable Energy Credit Program or SREC) to protect ratepayers and ensure solar incentives are tailored to the industry market segment (utility scale, rooftop, community solar). This will also ensure that each type of solar will receive enough to be built and no industry sector will receive more in incentives than necessary. This is expected to lead to the development of 4,000 MW of new solar by 2035! There is no rate-payer impact as the legislation simply shifts funds already being paid by rate payers.

2) Enables PORTABLE SOLAR, also known as BALCONY SOLAR. Portable solar offers a scalable, safe, and affordable solution to build more solar. Compact portable systems plug directly into a standard outlet and require no rooftop installation. These projects have already been authorized by law in Utah and, in fact, are sold at IKEA because they are so popular and easy to put together. Portable solar systems feed power into the home to offset consumption, reducing household electricity bills, mitigating climate warming emissions, and, when paired with a battery, offering energy resilience to households. Traditional rooftop solar is unavailable to many Marylanders, particularly renters, lower-income households, and homeowners with shaded or otherwise unsuitable roofs. Balcony/portable solar projects make solar more widely available to low-income Marylanders and renters.

Has been referred to House committee – Environment and Transportation
Has been referred to Senate committee – Education, Energy, and the Environment

To find your state delegate, state senator and their contact information:
Go to **mdelect.net** 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).

To find out more about a particular bill:
https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Legislation/Details/ *(add bill # - ex.* /SB0341/ *)*

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. Any and all efforts (individual, group lobbying and online petitions) will have an impact, so it's recommended that you pursue multiple avenues.