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Written Testimony of Christopher Phelps, Program Director  
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Environment Committee

Wednesday, February 9, 2011

Written testimony supporting Senate Bill 57, An Act Expanding The Beverage Container  
Redemption System

Senator Meyer, Representative Roy, Senator Roraback, Representative Chapin, and  
members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of SB 57. Environment  
Connecticut strongly supports this legislation.

Environment Connecticut applauded the legislature for taking the step in 2009 to expand  
Connecticut's Bottle Bill to include water containers. This long overdue common sense  
step significantly strengthened the Bottle Bill. At that time, we urged the legislature to  
include other non-carbonated beverages such as juices, teas and sport drinks in the Bottle  
Bill. While the legislature chose not to include those containers in the Bottle Bill in 2009,  
we believe the inherent common sense of the proposal remains and we urge you to  
approve SB 57 so that these additional beverage containers are included in the Bottle Bill.

When the Bottle Bill was first enacted, the overwhelming majority of disposable  
beverage containers purchased by Connecticut consumers contained carbonated  
beverages. Since then, the market for disposable containers of non-carbonated beverages,  
such as bottled water and juices, has grown dramatically. Including such containers in the  
Bottle Bill will help ensure that this law continues to play its important role in reducing  
litter and increasing recycling rates in our state.

Taking the step of expanding the Bottle Bill to include noncarbonated beverages beyond  
water is not unprecedented. If it were to do so, Connecticut would find itself in good  
company. California currently includes almost all non-carbonated beverages in its deposit  
program. Other states such as New York and Oregon have expanded their laws to include  
water and are considering legislation expanding their deposit systems to include  
additional beverages similarly to the provisions of SB 57.

## **The Bottle Bill Works**

The Bottle Bill ranks among the most successful environmental protection statutes on Connecticut's books. Before it was enacted in 1978, millions of bottles and cans littered our state's beaches, parks, and roadways. Millions more were thrown into landfills. Today, over 1.1 billion cans and bottles are redeemed for deposit each year in Connecticut. That is approximately 70% of deposit containers and 55% of all beverage containers sold in the state.

The Bottle Bill, in conjunction with existing recycling programs, allows Connecticut to maximize recycling of beverage containers. In fact, Connecticut DEP has reported that *states with bottle bills have much higher recycling rates for containers than non-bottle bill states.*<sup>1</sup> In general, Bottle Bill states recycle more than twice as many beverage containers as states without deposit laws.<sup>2</sup> The Bottle Bill maximizes recycling results.

The costs of the Bottle Bill are internalized to the cost of the product, following the "polluter pays" model. Responsibility for the costs associated with litter control and recycling through the Bottle Bill is borne by producers of beverage containers. Taxpayers and consumers are relieved of the burden. Further, by escheating unclaimed deposits to the state as the state currently does, the benefit for consumers and taxpayers is maximized. Environment Connecticut urges the General Assembly to consider dedicating future revenue from unclaimed Bottle Bill deposits to funding expanded state and municipal recycling programs.

## **Update the Bottle Bill – A Cost-Effective Way to Boost Recycling and Reduce Litter**

As noted above, over 1 billion cans and bottles are redeemed for deposit each year in Connecticut. Without the Bottle Bill, these containers would end up burdening Connecticut's municipal solid waste and recycling programs or littering our state's parks, roadways and beaches. The Bottle Bill's 5-cent deposit creates a monetary incentive that results in recycling of these waste materials without costing taxpayers a single cent.

By expanding the bottle deposit to include additional noncarbonated beverages, SB 57 will update the Bottle Bill for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In the years since the Bottle Bill's adoption, non-carbonated beverages have become an increasing part of the beverage market. Based on evaluation of past beverage industry sales of non-carbonated beverages, the Container Recycling Institute has estimated that as hundreds of millions of additional containers would be redeemed for deposit and recycling annually under an expanded Bottle Bill. As with the current system, this would be achieved at no cost to taxpayers.

The Bottle Bill's success speaks for itself. Hawaii adopted a new Bottle Bill in 2002. New York and Oregon have expanded their Bottle Bills to include bottled water. By

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<sup>1</sup> Connecticut DEP website, <http://www.ct.gov/dep/cwp/view.asp?a=2714&q=324834>. Accessed 1/30/09

<sup>2</sup> Science Applications International, "Packaging Restrictions Research: Targeting Packaging for Reduction, Reuse, Recycling and Recycled Content", 2000, p.36

extending the Bottle Bill's success rate for redemption to noncarbonated beverages SB 57 brings Connecticut's Bottle Bill into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Connecticut needs to redouble its efforts to combat litter, increase recycling rates, and reduce the amount of solid waste we produce and dispose of in polluting incinerators and landfills. Expanding the Bottle Bill can be an important component of such an effort. An expanded Bottle Bill offers opportunities for Connecticut to leverage the success of the bottle deposit system to further these efforts and increase recycling success in municipalities across the state.

Environment Connecticut applauds the decision by the legislature to escheat unclaimed deposits to the state as enacted in PA 09-1. However, we urge you to consider dedicating future revenue from unclaimed deposits to funding state and municipal recycling programs with the goal of increasing overall recycling rates for a wide range of recyclable materials statewide.

### **Conclusion**

Environment Connecticut supports an updated Bottle bill for Connecticut. The Bottle Bill is a proven, effective method of reducing litter and maximizing container recycling rates. We urge the General Assembly to enact SB 57 and expand the Bottle Bill to include additional noncarbonated beverages and consider dedicating unclaimed deposit revenues to funding expanded state and municipal recycling programs.

Sincerely,

Christopher Phelps  
Environment Connecticut