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

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Supporting Senate Bill 67: AN ACT CONCERNING THE INCLUSION OF JUICES, TEAS AND SPORTS DRINKS UNDER CONNECTICUT'S BOTTLE BILL.

Senator Meyer, Representative Gentile, and members of the committee: My name is Chris Phelps and I am Campaign Director for Environment Connecticut. Our organization is a nonprofit member-based environmental advocacy organization working to protect Connecticut's air, water, and natural landscape. We appreciate this opportunity to offer testimony in support of SB 67, AN ACT CONCERNING THE INCLUSION OF JUICES, TEAS AND SPORTS DRINKS UNDER CONNECTICUT'S BOTTLE BILL.

In 2009, we applauded the General Assembly for taking the step of updating and expanding Connecticut's Bottle Bill to include disposable water bottles. This long overdue common sense step significantly increased the number of disposable bottles captured for recycling through the Bottle Bill. At the time we urged the legislature to include other beverages such as juices, teas, and sports drinks in the updated Bottle Bill. Therefore, we strongly support this proposal offered today in SB 67.

When the Bottle Bill was first enacted, the overwhelming majority of disposable beverage containers purchased by consumers contained carbonated beverages. In the more than 30 years since then, the beverage marketplace has changed dramatically and seen an explosion in sales of bottled water, juices, teas, sports drinks, and other beverages. Including such beverage containers in the Bottle Bill will help ensure that this law continues to play its important and successful role in reducing litter and maximizing recycling of disposable containers.

The Bottle Bill Works

The Bottle Bill ranks among the most successful of Connecticut's environmental protection statutes. Before its enactment in 1978, millions of bottles and cans littered our beaches, parks, and roadways. Millions more were thrown into landfills. Today, more than a billion bottles and cans are redeemed for deposit each year in Connecticut. That is estimated to be 70% or more of such containers. By comparison, the recycling rate for beverage containers in states without bottle bills is estimated to be as low as 25%.

The Bottle Bill, in conjunction with curbside and other recycling programs, helps Connecticut maximize its overall recycling rate for beverage containers. This is important because of the sheer volume of disposable beverage containers as well as the economic value of the recyclable materials captured through redemption of those containers.

The costs of the Bottle Bill are internalized to the cost of the product, following the “polluter pays” or “producer responsibility” model. Under the Bottle Bill, responsibility for the costs associated with management of the waste created through sale of disposable beverage containers in Connecticut is borne by producers and sellers of these materials. Further, by escheating unclaimed deposits to the state, the benefit for consumers and taxpayers is maximized. Environment Connecticut respectfully suggests that the General Assembly consider maximizing this benefit by dedicating future unclaimed deposit revenue to funding expanded state and municipal recycling programs, thereby leveraging the Bottle Bill to also maximize recycling of materials other than beverage containers.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer this testimony. Environment Connecticut strongly supports an updated and improved bottle bill and urges the General Assembly to approve SB 67.

Sincerely,

Chris Phelps

Campaign Director

Environment Connecticut

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