Mark Gaedje Assistant Store Manager Price Chopper Supermarkets
Testimony in Opposition to SB 67 an Act Concerning the Inclusion of Juices, Teas and Sports Drinks under CT's Bottle Bill

Good Afternoon Senator Meyer and Representative Gentile and members of the Environment Committee. My name is Mark Gaedje and I am the Assistant Store Manager at Price Chopper in Vernon, CT. Price Chopper has been in business in Ct since 1995, when we opened our Torrington location and has since expanded to 7 other locations since then throughout the state employing over 1300 teammates in our stores.
I am writing in opposition to the SB 67, an Act Concerning the Inclusion of Juices, Teas, and Sports Drinks under Connecticut's Bottle Bill.

Although I understand the committee's want to increase the recycling rate in CT, I feel that expanding the bottle bill is a move in the wrong direction. The bottle bill was born in the 1970's as a litter initiative; decades before automated garbage pick- up, high tech sort separation machines in trash facilities, and the expansion of the types of beverages that residents are consuming. Towns have successfully introduced and consumers embraced single stream recycling which is far less expensive and more sanitary to operate. I do not understand the need to expand the bottle bill at this time.

Reverse vending machines are very costly to rent and take up a lot of space that would otherwise be used to sell groceries. The current handling fee (1.5 cents on beer and 2.0 cents on water and soda) does not cover cost and has never been increased since the bottle law's inception. In fact, in Connecticut we lose a ½ cent for every container that we take back. The bottles and cans that come back are filthy and constant sanitation of the bottle rooms and shopping carts are required. Current reverse vending machines do not handle the multiple sizes and shapes of juice containers and more specifically juice cartons. It is mind boggling why trash is being brought back to Price Chopper, a store that sells fresh, healthy commodities when curbside options are available.

The expansion to water resulted in higher costs to the retailer from the water manufacturers as they had to recover their costs that they experienced from implementing the container return system. These costs were passed onto the consumer. Sales of bottled water decreased. Expect the same scenario when the bottle bill is further expanded to juice, teas, fruit and sports drinks. In today's economic climate in the state and the cutback in SNAP benefits, now is not the time to increase a consumer's food bill.

As a company Price Chopper looks for ways each day to control costs and make sure that we are environmentally conscious. We compost food scraps and recycle boxes and numerous other materials in our stores. We have programs that incentivize consumers to bring their own bags, cutting down on the use of paper and plastic. We are good corporate citizens that are concerned about the environment, but we think there is a better more efficient way to accomplish increases in recycling than expansion of the bottle law.

Governor Malloy has introduced Governor's Bill No 27- An Act Concerning Connecticut's Recycling and Materials Management Strategy. This act would look to modernize the state's solid waste management infrastructure, promote organic materials management, and more. That's the future of sound environmental policy!

Expansion of the bottle law, at this time, would be bad for my business and will cost the consumer more for their groceries. I urge you to reject SB 67.