

LaBonne's

MARKETS

Date: January 30, 2015

To: Senator Kennedy and Representative Albis

From: Robert LaBonne Jr. President of LaBonne's Market's

Subject: HB No. 6033 Expansion of CT's Bottle Bill

I am writing you regarding the proposed expansion of the CT Bottle Bill, specifically HB No. 6033. LaBonne's Market's is a 3rd generation business in our 53rd year in business, started by my Grandfather and Father in 1962 in 900 square feet store in Watertown with just 3 employees. Today we have 4 locations in Watertown, Woodbury, Southbury and Salisbury employing over 330 associates. Our stores are typically small for grocery stores and I feel adding this additional burden to our industry is not in the best interest of consumers and especially grocery store owners.

The current bottle bill already is a cost of operating in CT. We lost over \$5,000 last year not including any labor to handle bottle returns. That amount comes from our bottle return revenue, minus cost of bottle vending machines monthly rental and supply costs. Making matters worse grocery stores redeem the majority of bottles. When did you last bring your returns to a chain drug store? You don't see these machines at their locations, because they cost a lot of money and it is a losing proposition. Yet 50% of the newer chain drug store designs are all grocery related products, which includes soda and water and these items are advertised weekly in their sales flyers. Even big box stores and club stores are not known for bottle redemption, but at least they have them.

Where do you think the bags of ground up bottles, cans and glass goes when the machines fill up? I invite you to visit any of our stores, we do not have any more room to store all these bags and totes full of the crushed returnable's. As it is, we have to store some of these outside in some locations which is not pleasant for our neighbors to see. The majority of bottles are not rinsed out, so the sugar in soda and sports drinks and teas is an attraction to insects. **We are in the business of selling fresh food, why would you want us to also use the same buildings to be trash handlers?** It makes no sense and we do not have the room to handle more waste in our small stores.

This bill will also add to our costs and the product costs, which in turn will be passed on to consumers. Single source recycling is the way to go using the current trash haulers who are better prepared to handle beverage containers without affecting consumable food as we are vulnerable to bug infestation.

Our stores were one of the first stores in our area working with a local trash hauler to start their first composting our food waste route over 18 months ago. We recycle all our cardboard, our metal and plastic recyclables, cooking oil, plastic bags, and we offer 5 cent refund if consumers bring and use reusable bags. In every aspect of our business we are making an effort to reduce, reuse and recycle.

I agree there must be an increased effort to continue to recycle any item that can have a second use. I strongly feel using supermarkets as redemption facilitators is not a smart decision in the best interest of food safety and cost control.

Again if at any time anyone on your committee would like to tour our stores so you can see the challenges we are currently faced with; let me know and we'll show you what I've tried to explain in this letter. I strongly encourage you to vote no for HB No. 6033. Thank you all for your time and I truly appreciate all your efforts to clean up CT and reduce our trash volume.

Sincerely,

Robert La Bonne Jr.
President & CEO
LaBonne's Market's
PO Box 448
Woodbury, CT 06798