



Connecticut Department of
**ENERGY &
ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION**

**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

Public Hearing – February 4, 2015
Environment Committee

Testimony Submitted by Commissioner Robert J. Klee

Raised House Bill No. 6033 – AAC THE INCLUSION OF JUICES, TEAS AND SPORTS DRINKS UNDER CONNECTICUT'S BOTTLE BILL

Raised Senate Bill No. 349 – AAC SINGLE-USE CARRYOUT PLASTIC AND PAPER BAGS AND THE USE OF REUSABLE BAGS

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding **Raised House Bill No. 6033 – AAC THE INCLUSION OF JUICES, TEAS AND SPORTS DRINKS UNDER CONNECTICUT'S BOTTLE BILL** and **Raised Senate Bill No. 349 – AAC SINGLE-USE CARRYOUT PLASTIC AND PAPER BAGS AND THE USE OF REUSABLE BAGS**. The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) welcomes the opportunity to offer the following testimony.

In 2010, Connecticut recycled and composted about 26% of its waste. That rate has remained relatively flat over the past decade. Connecticut still disposes of 2.4 million tons of trash annually, an estimated 1,370 pounds of trash per person per year. We certainly can do better by adopting the following hierarchy: first, reducing consumption; second, transforming solid waste management into a materials economy that can create jobs through reuse; and last, but not least, through recycling materials whenever feasible.

Bottle Bill - Connecticut's forward thinking bottle bill program was enacted in 1978 and became effective January 1, 1980. It was created as an anti-litter program, though the program also results in the recycling of containers collected through the bottle bill system. Recyclables collected through the bottle bill systems generally have less contamination and have greater commodity value than similar materials collected through other (e.g., single stream) recycling programs. In 2009, the program was expanded to include water bottles.

Legislation passed last year (P.A. 14-94) calls for a dramatic increase in state-wide recycling rates over the next 10 years, and calls for the creation of a Comprehensive Materials Management Strategy (CMMS) that will enable the state to achieve this ambitious goal. The process to develop the CMMS is underway, and DEEP will be undertaking a waste characterization study. We believe this analysis will lead to a better understanding of the role Connecticut's bottle bill should play going forward, and how it should interact with

Connecticut's efforts to further product stewardship through extended producer responsibility (EPR) programs.

Single Use Bags – Again, as stated above, as part of CMMS, DEEP will be undertaking a waste characterization study. This analysis should address how plastics and films can be better managed. While the types of plastics bags that are the subject of this proposal are no doubt convenient for carrying items home from stores, these bags can become a source of litter and can cause harm to animals if not recycled or disposed of properly. The use of reusable bags in lieu of “single-use” bags would certainly have positive environmental results.

DEEP does have a question regarding the definition of “single-use carryout bag”, which includes a description that it is not “one hundred per cent recyclable.” The plastic bags that we believe this proposal is geared toward are recyclable, just not through the average Connecticut resident's curbside recycling bin program. These plastics bags (and other plastic films) are 100% recyclable, and they are currently collected and processed through voluntary programs. The most common collection points for these bags to be recycled are typically at grocery stores and other retail locations.

It is important to recognize voluntary efforts can be successful, particularly while DEEP is analyzing the management of plastic bags and films in the CMMS process. For example, high school student Etta Hanlon from Branford dramatically increased the recycling of holiday wrapping paper through a voluntary education and outreach campaign, enlisting the help of school children. These types of campaigns can go a long way towards creating a mindful and environmentally conscious society.

DEEP also notes that compostable or bio-degradable plastic bags, while appearing almost identical to regular plastic bags, are not recyclable and are considered a contaminant and a detriment to the recycling process. Also, it is likely that composting facilities and certain anaerobic digestion facilities would prefer that most compostable bags were not included along with the organic materials that these facilities will be processing. For these reasons, DEEP suggests that compostable bags should not be encouraged as an alternative, unless they meet certain certifications specified by composting and anaerobic digestion facilities.

One other hidden cost of the single-use bags is that they often get stuck in the machinery that processes the single stream recyclables, and hours are spent each day at each facility manually removing the entwined bags. Education on proper drop-off locations and the establishment of additional convenient drop-off locations would reduce the maintenance burden for single stream processing facilities and could help to reduce the amount of plastic bag litter present in Connecticut.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on these proposals. If you should require any additional information, please contact Robert LaFrance, DEEP's Director of Governmental Affairs, at 860.424.3401 or Robert.LaFrance@ct.gov (or, Elizabeth McAuliffe, DEEP Legislative Liaison, at 860.424.3458 or Elizabeth.McAuliffe@ct.gov).