CONNECTICUT
Land Conservation Council

Testimony regarding Raised Senate Bill No. 312
General Law Committee
Submitted by Amy Blaymore Paterson, Esq., Executive Director
Connecticut Land Conservation Council
March 11, 2016

Senator Leone, Representative Baram and members of the General Law Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to present testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) regarding Raised Senate Bill No. 312, An Act Requiring the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to Study Bottle Bill Beverage Container Refund Values and Redemption Fees. CLCC is opposed to this bill because it suggests the repeal and replacement of the present bottle deposit-and-refund law with a non-refundable four-cent fee.

As Connecticut's umbrella organization for the land conservation community, the Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) works with the state's land trusts (now numbering 137+), state conservation and advocacy organizations, government entities and landowners to increase the pace, quality, scale and permanency of land conservation in Connecticut while assuring the perpetual, high quality stewardship of conserved lands in the state.

At first glance, it would appear that commenting on a bill that could lead to the elimination of the bottle bill is a bit outside the scope of our land conservation mission. However, successful land conservation is as much about the perpetual care of the habitats and other conservation values of the land as it is about securing the legal protection of the land to begin with. At every level, both public and private, we need to continue to do whatever we can to ensure continued quality and active stewardship and management of conservation lands throughout the state. And with the majority of our state's 137 land trusts operating on the backs of volunteers, this is no easy task.

Land management and stewardship is a huge responsibility of land trust and community park and open space volunteers and staff; their daily work includes everything from implementing management plans, building and maintaining trails, battling invasives, monitoring for violations of the easements, encroachments and other illegal activity, to picking up trash!

The current bottle bill provides financial incentives for people to collect discarded containers and/or not to create such litter in the first place. It is a tool that has helped in the constant battle to keep our preserves, parks and other open spaces free of debris that is unsightly and possibly harmful to the quality of our land and water. CLCC is concerned that eliminating the financial incentive to collect discarded containers for cash will only lead to less recycling and more litter in our preserves and communities.

On behalf of the Connecticut Land Conservation Council, I thank you for this opportunity to provide our comments. We would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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