

Testimony- CT General Assembly Environment Committee – March 13, 2017

Re: **Raised Bill 996-**

An Act Establishing a Bottle Recycling Fee in Lieu of a Refundable Deposit – Opposed

Re: **Committee Bill 5618-**

An Act Concerning an Increase in the Handling Fee for Bottle Redemption Centers – In Favor

Senator Kennedy, Senator Miner, Rep. Demicco, and members of the Environment Committee,

My name is Pat Bourne. I have testified at many public hearings in my capacity as Executive Director of SARAH, Inc., an agency providing services to over 600 children and adults with differing abilities throughout the State. I come to you today as the person responsible for the **SARAH Redemption Center**, a small business and social enterprise, located in East Haven. **I urge you to support Committee Bill 5618 and increase the handling fee for Bottle Redemption Centers and to oppose raised bill 996 which proposes to impose a tax in lieu of a refundable deposit.**

It is estimated that 75-80% of people with disabilities are unemployed. One of SARAH's primary missions is to help people with differing abilities find and keep employment. To that end, we created SARAH Recycles. **SARAH Recycles** is an innovative program where SARAH supported workers collect and process donated refundable bottles and cans. We partner with municipalities, local businesses and the public at large and every nickel is turned into a paycheck for a SARAH supported worker. SARAH Recycles collects over 1 million donated bottles and cans annually!

The SARAH Redemption Center is a natural extension of SARAH Recycles. Several years ago, we reopened and assumed operation of a small bottle redemption center that went out of business in East Haven. We took on this venture as a social enterprise to support our mission. Like other small businesses, we are an economic engine in our local community – we reopened a shuttered business and revitalized the shopping center. We provide jobs for those who were previously unemployed – including SARAH supported workers. The customers who bring their bottles and cans to the SARAH Redemption Center spend their nickels to supplement their incomes and to buy essential household items in the adjacent shops.

Raised Bill 996 will end that. Replacing the bottle refundable deposit with a recycling fee imposes another regressive tax on CT citizens who are already overtaxed and will hurt the people who need those nickels the most. The bottle bill was enacted 30 years ago as an anti-litter measure to encourage recycling and redemption. A “fee” in lieu of a refundable deposit will have the reverse effect.

And, despite our best efforts, we can't make the Redemption Center work. As with every small business, the basic costs of our operation increases yet the handling fee has remained the same for the past 30 years. We took over a closed redemption center. Several more have recently closed. Increasing the handling fee will keep the SARAH Redemption Center and other redemption centers in business.

Recycling and Redemption is a win/win – putting people to work, helping the local economy and protecting the environment. Please support those measures that will promote these efforts.

