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in support of

HB 5618, AAC An Increase in the Handling Fee for Bottle Redemption Centers

Before the Committee on Environment
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Chairperson Kennedy, Chairperson Miner, Chairperson Demicco, Ranking Member Harding, and members of the Environment Committee, my name is Katharine Cohen and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Public Interest Research Group (ConnPIRG). I am here today to testify with in support of HB 5618, An Act Concerning an Increase in the Handling Fee for Bottle Redemption Centers.

Bottle bills are one of the most effective and simple recycling programs ever created. Bottle bills achieve higher recycling rates than residential recycling programs. By source separating, the quality of the recycled material is higher, thus creating more opportunities to use this recycled content and yielding greater value..

The Bottle Bill was created in 1980 to increase recycling and reduce litter. It covered beer and soda bottles, the most common bottles on the market at the time. In 2009, the law was updated to include bottled water but not the plethora of other bottles we use today, like juice drinks, sports and energy drinks, and teas. Right now, ¼ of all bottles sold in Connecticut are not covered by the bottle bill.

We should recycle everything that we can, and waste less. There are many things we can do to waste less and recycle more, and we should start with what we know works: the bottle bill. The bottle bill is the most effective recycling program in the state but it needs updates to improve it and sustain it.

The bottle bill does not cover newer containers like sports drinks and teas. Each year, almost 300 million bottles not covered by the bottle bill are thrown away in Connecticut, ending up as litter or being sent to landfills and incinerators – that's enough bottles to blanket the entire stretch of I-91 in Connecticut. 70% of bottles with a 5 cent deposit are recycled, as opposed to 25% of bottles without a deposit. We can stop this unnecessary waste by updating the bottle bill - we need a bigger better bottle bill that covers all types of containers on the market today.

Connecticut has a goal of reaching 58% diversion of waste by 2024 but we've been stuck at around 30% diversion for over a decade. We need to make our most effective recycling program as effective as it can be.



That is why it is the bottle bill handling fee should be updated to reflect the role the redemption centers and retailers play in the collection of materials. Right now, the handling fee in Connecticut is 1.5/2 cents. If we fail to update the handling fee, retailers may have to close their redemption centers, or redemption centers may have to close down or move out of state, which would be an impediment to our entire recycling program under the bottle bill.

We should raise the handling fee to help redemption centers and stores that take back bottles. CT currently has the lowest handling fee in the region (1.5/2 cents) and should be raised to 3 cents for each beverage container.

Again, I thank you for the opportunity to testify today. We look forward to working with the Committee and the General Assembly throughout the session to address this issue.

ConnPIRG is a statewide consumer organization committed to standing up to powerful interests when they threaten our health and safety, our financial security or our right to fully participate in our democratic society.