



Environment Committee Public Hearing March 13, 2017

Testimony for Save Our Water CT Supporting HB-5618; Opposing SB-996

To Chairs Senator Kennedy, Senator Miner, Representative Demicco and members of the Environment Committee:

SAVE OUR WATER CT urges you to support legislation that enhances the effectiveness of the bottle deposit program by increasing the redemption handling fee to 4 cents, by broadening the categories of beverage containers accepted in the program, and by raising the bottle deposit fee to 10 cents.

We therefore **support HB-5618: AN ACT CONCERNING AN INCREASE IN THE HANDLING FEE FOR BOTTLE REDEMPTION CENTERS**, with modification to include raising the bottle deposit fee to 10 cents, and as well submit testimony to **oppose S.B. No. 996 (RAISED): AN ACT ESTABLISHING A BOTTLE RECYCLING FEE IN LIEU OF A REFUNDABLE DEPOSIT**.

As one of ten states benefiting from a comprehensive recycling program using both container deposits and curbside recycling, CT has been in the forefront of smart recycling policy. **By removing the existing bottle deposit fee (5 cents) and installing a recycling fee, S.B. No. 996 would end a largely successful program and replace it with an alternative that has not stood up to independent analysis.** The Delaware model of “universal recycling” has been shown to be less effective than the system already in use in CT, a mixed Curbside (aka Universal) Recycling and Deposit Return program. The independent Container Recycling Institute (CRI) has closely reviewed the impact of the Delaware model and states that the 2015 “Issue Analysis” of the American Beverage Association (ABA) does not include a variety of facts and measures that show significant shortcomings of such an approach, especially in states like CT with long successful “bottle bill” programs. While the new Delaware program did increase recycling in that state, this is partly explained by the fact that prior to the new program, Delaware had one of the weakest recycling programs in the U.S. The increase looked substantial because they were starting from such a low curbside recycling rate. In Connecticut we have had a robust, statewide curbside recycling program since 1989 and a bottle deposit program since 1980. We have much to be proud of; let’s make it better, not take a step backwards.

In researching the handling fee for bottle redemption centers, the subject of H.B. 5618, I called **the Manchester Redemption Center, 95 Hilliard Street, Manchester**. I spoke with a woman who said that **they have run the business for many years, the fee has remained the same and the work has gotten more difficult** because they must separate containers. Clearly it is hard to stay in business under such conditions. I told her that advocates were trying to raise the handling fees and the bottle deposit to 10 cents and, and she was very appreciative. By raising the deposit and handling fee, CT can not only increase the return rate for bottles, but maintain jobs in redemption centers.

SAVE OUR WATER CT urges the committee to amend HB 5618 to increase the deposit as well as the handling fee. The average US return rate for containers in a state with a deposit program is 71% versus 29% in states without return deposit. (<http://www.bottlebill.org/about/benefits/jobs.htm>) Up until

this year, Michigan was the only state with a 10-cent deposit; their return rate is over 90%. (Container Recycling Institute www.container-recycling.org). Effective April 1, Oregon will double its deposit from 5 to 10 cents. Recognizing that a nickel deposit isn't the financial incentive it was 40 years earlier and concerned that the recycling rate was declining, the Oregon legislature decreed in 2011 that if its recycling rate fell below 80% for two consecutive years, they would double the deposit. In July 2016, 2014 and 2015 results were announced: 68% and 64%, respectively. (http://www.oregonlive.com/portland/index.ssf/2016/08/oregon_bottle_deposit_will_go.html) Connecticut's rate currently is about 60% - let's make it better!

Increasing the deposit doesn't require taxpayer funding. It would further reduce the number of containers in curbside recycling, lowering curbside recycling cost for municipalities, and by extension, local taxpayers. The quality of recycled material would improve, as beverage containers returned in redemption centers are pre-sorted and not exposed to toxic contaminants that can be present in single stream recycling. These are much more likely to be remade into new containers, saving on energy in the production process and avoiding unnecessary emissions.

Of course, it would also reduce environmental degradation from discarded containers, many of which end up in our oceans and harm life all the way up the food chain. Single serve plastic water bottles, often consumed away from home, are particularly prone to be discarded. One recent study estimates that by 2050, there will be more plastic mass in the oceans than fish. Save Our Water CT is acutely aware of the potential for increased plastic pollution accompanying potentially 10 million additional single serve water bottles which are to be manufactured daily in Bloomfield, CT in the coming years.

SAVE OUR WATER CT is grateful that the Environment Committee is considering the issue of how best to encourage recycling and reduce waste in CT. We have made a strong start, being one of the Nation's leaders in bottle deposit and curbside recycling. Let's strengthen what we have achieved.

Respectfully,

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