



State of Connecticut
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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Testimony of Rep. Mary Mushinsky (85th) in Support of HB 5618, An Act Concerning an Increase in the Handling Fee for Bottle Redemption Centers

Before the Environment Committee

March 13, 2017 10:30 p.m. Room 2B

Bottle law states produce the largest volume of high quality recycled material (glass, metal, and plastic) compared to non-bottle law states. In fact, the Glass Packaging Institute estimates that 80% of their recycled glass material used to make new containers comes from the 10 bottle law states. They use this material because it is clean and high value, and ready for re-melting. Similarly, p.e.t. plastic bottles from the 10 bottle law states are readily re-used to manufacture fleece outdoor wear. This pure material reaches manufacturers by passing through redemption centers in the community—but they are steadily closing because Connecticut has not changed the handling fee per container in 34 years. It remains 1.5 cents for beer and 2 cents for soda. This compensation, legislated decades ago, is out of date and does not cover the cost of redemption.

The store in my town, M&M Redemption, recently went out of business, just as they predicted last year. Another redemption center in Bristol closed the next day. An estimated 30 redemption centers in Connecticut have shrunk to 10, and the state's beverage container redemption rate has declined from 70% to 53%. (The other factor in the decline of the redemption rate is the 39 year old returnable deposit of 5 cents, which never changed in Connecticut although other states increased it to 10 cents.)

Redemption centers exist because the law encouraged them to take back containers for neighboring supermarkets and package stores located within one mile, and because they accept containers no matter where they were purchased. Grocery stores will only accept the type of containers they sell. In Wallingford, M&M Redemption took large quantities of containers from students, sports teams, charities, Boy and Girl Scouts, church groups, and seniors looking to pay their electric bills. These folks would collect bags of containers from neighbors, streets and town parks, keeping the town clean at no cost to the municipality while making money for their cause.

The bottle law works well with the redemption centers complementing the grocers to recycle at a high rate. It works extremely well in neighboring states that have raised the handling fee for redemption centers, and shared a portion of escheated deposits with the beer and soda distributors. In those states, the recycling rate is very high, thousands are employed in redemption centers, and streets and parks are kept clean by volunteers who pick up and redeem the beverage containers.

This bill will help the redemption centers survive so they may continue to serve the public and the municipalities.