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March 13, 2017

Statement of the Connecticut Food Association - Environmental Committee

Wayne Pesce, President, Connecticut Food Association

In Support of * H.B. No. 5618 - AN ACT CONCERNING AN INCREASE IN THE HANDLING FEE FOR BOTTLE REDEMPTION CENTERS

The Connecticut Food Association (CFA) proudly advocates on behalf of the food retail industry. Its mission is to cultivate Connecticut's grocery industry through economic development, nutrition & wellness, environmental stewardship and community service. CFA membership covers the spectrum of diverse venues where food is sold, including single owner grocery stores, large supermarket chains, food distributors, food manufacturers, and specialty food purveyors.

On behalf of Connecticut's grocery retailers, I urge you to support HB 5618 – To promote recycling and the continued employment of workers in the bottle redemption industry.

Last year the total universe of initiated deposits was over 1.3B annual containers, with 665mm being redeemed. Grocery stores took back 72% or 478mm of these redeemed containers whereas redemption facilities took back just 21%. Total handling fee income generated off the current \$0.0175 handling fee in CT was approximately \$12.9 mm. Not all of this redeemed volume, or the funding associated with it, is split evenly. Stores in Fairfield County are overrun with volume by professional redeemers while stores in other parts of the state lose money from lack of volume. Also, this proposal has a split handling fee of \$0.025 for beer and \$0.03 for soft drinks. There is no logical or economic reason for beer to have a lower handling fee than soft drinks or water. If anything glass should have a higher handling fee as most deposit glass comes from beer which is in fact more difficult to source separate due to breakage, source contamination and weight. Almost every other deposit bill state has a \$0.035 handling fee and if we retailers are going to operate in a bottle law environment going forward, it is appropriate after 38 years, to adjust our fee accordingly, along with all others who provide this service.

The Connecticut Food Association will continue to incent, educate and motivate consumers to do what's right for our state and for our member's business interest. Through public outreach campaigns, public service announcements, marketing campaigns, consumer incentives, and a sustained measurable approach, Connecticut's grocery community will support practical initiatives that reduce our carbon foot print and make our state a better place to live, work and raise our families.