

Testimony of Christopher Roos
President, Teamsters Local 1035

In opposition to S.B. 995 An Act Concerning the Reduction of Certain Land-based Marine and Freshwater Debris, S.B. 996 An Act Establishing a Bottle Recycling Fee in lieu of a Refundable Deposit, and H.B. 5618 An Increase in the Handling Fee for Bottle Redemption Centers

Co-Chairs Kennedy, Miner, and Demicco, thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Christopher Roos, and I am the President of Teamsters Local 1035. I represent 550 union employees in warehouse, distribution and production positions in Connecticut. Our members work for Coca-Cola, Pepsi, Hartford Distributors and Rogo Distributors. They play a critical role in bottling, warehousing, and delivering some of the most popular beverages that fill the shelves and coolers of local stores and restaurants throughout the region. These are manufacturing and distribution jobs that provide a solid and stable income to support hardworking families in Connecticut – jobs that are too often at risk of being lost in today's economy.

On behalf of our members, I am here today to testify in opposition to any legislative measures that would expand the state's Bottle Bill, increase the forced deposit on beverage containers or caps, or raise the handling fee. We are troubled by the prospect of doubling the deposit from five to ten cents or raising the handling fee from two to three cents on soft drinks and water because those proposals would create a significant negative impact on the businesses that employ our members.

While we applaud the efforts of legislators to think creatively about the future of recycling, as put forth in a bill that would replace the refundable deposit law with a recycling fee, we have serious concerns that this proposal, as currently written, would also be detrimental to the beverage industry by saddling it with even higher costs for doing business. With significant increased costs of doing business in the state, the jobs of our members will be at stake.

With respect to the handling fee, this is a direct cost to distributors, further increasing the cost of doing business in Connecticut. My understanding is that every one cent change in the handling fee adds \$6.5 million to the cost of the forced deposit law.

You'll hear from other members of our coalition about the specific impact of these bills on their businesses and from experts who are much more knowledgeable about why an expansion of the Bottle Bill represents the old way of thinking about recycling and the environment. So I'll keep my message brief. Connecticut has already felt the sting of big companies leaving, and we should be doing everything in our power to keep good paying jobs in the state.

Our members take tremendous pride in the work they do and for their contributions to the community. I urge you and your colleagues to seriously consider the real economic ramifications of the bills you are weighing today because we will be the ones to feel the loss if the cost of doing business continues to rise.

We are all for supporting the environment and improving the way that people recycle, but doubling down on a broken and ineffective system is not the way to go. I am not convinced that any of these proposals actually address environmental challenges in a positive way. I am convinced, however, that if approved, they would make for higher business costs that could lead to fewer jobs for my members. And that's a proposition that we certainly cannot afford.

In summary, Teamsters Local 1035 stands in opposition to S.B. 995, S.B. 996, and H.B. 5618 because the benefits of these bills are uncertain but the impact on jobs is. Thank you to the members of this committee for your consideration today.