

Testimony for the Environment Committee March 13, 2017
in Support of HB-5618 and Against SB-996

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

I am writing in **strong support of HB-5618: AN ACT CONCERNING AN INCREASE IN THE HANDLING FEE FOR BOTTLE REDEMPTION CENTERS**. Reduce, reuse, recycle. has been a mantra of environmentalism. However, without neighborhood redemption centers, recycling becomes harder or impossible for a significant portion of the population. Given the current low redemption handling fee, many centers are going out of business due to the lack of sustainability. Grocery store recyclers may not accept all the containers suitable for recycling. Charitable organizations, who raise funds through bottle redemption drives, and those individuals relying on a small income from collecting recyclables will also be affected. Increasing the redemption fee will provide needed support to the recycling program.

Importantly it has been established that recycled materials from redemption centers are of “higher quality” than those in single-stream collection systems. They are pre-sorted and have not been exposed to toxic products (such as ammonia or bleach), as can happen with recyclables mixed together in single stream collection bins. This makes them more suitable as substrate for new beverage containers, saving energy and emissions. The unsorted, lower grade recyclables meanwhile are often turned into roadbed (glass) or fiber products (plastics).

Ideally, recycling would be expanded to include containers of iced tea, fruit juices, and sports drinks. Likewise, the bottle deposit fee would be increased to 10 cents/bottle. According to data from Michigan’s program, this would increase the redemption rates from CT’s paltry 51% to the 90% range.

I am also writing to **oppose SB-996: AN ACT ESTABLISHING A BOTTLE RECYCLING FEE IN LIEU OF A REFUNDABLE DEPOSIT**. An in-depth analysis of the Delaware model by the non-profit Container Recycling Institute notes that much of the perceived improvement in Delaware’s recycling rates can be attributed to its poor baseline statistics (last in the nation with access to curbside recycling and one of the worst container deposit laws). In addition, the elimination of a bottle deposit/redemption program has lowered the overall quality of the recycled material. Plastic and glass contaminated by exposure to substances hazardous to human health is not recycled into actual beverage containers, but rather made into materials such as roadbed or fiber products.

A hybrid system of deposit -returns and curbside single-stream recycling presents the best model for states. CT’s program contains both and will be strengthened by an increase in the bottle deposit fee, a broadening of those items accepted for redemption, and an increase in the redemption handling fee.

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