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CGA Environment Committee
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106
By email: envtestimony@cga.ct.gov

Dear Members of the Committee,

The Container Recycling Institute (CRI) conceptually supports Bill HB 7294, with suggestions for amendments. HB 7294 would update Connecticut's beverage container deposit law, or "bottle bill," in several ways. If passed, HB 7294 would:

- Add new beverage types to the program: sports drinks, energy drinks, juice and tea;
- Increase the deposit from five to ten cents;
- Increase handling fees to 3.5¢ for beer and 4.5¢ for other beverages;
- Allow beverage distributors to retain 20% of unclaimed deposits; and,
- Increase the radius for redemption center "convenience" from one mile to five miles.

Updating the deposit law to include more beverage types is an idea whose time has come. When Connecticut's bottle bill was enacted in 1978, it applied to carbonated beverages like soda and beer. Over time, other beverage types were introduced and took a larger market share, and Connecticut responded by adding water to its deposit law in 2009. The new beverage types that are proposed in HB 7294— juice, sports drinks, and tea – amounted to **315 million bottles and cans** in Connecticut in 2015.

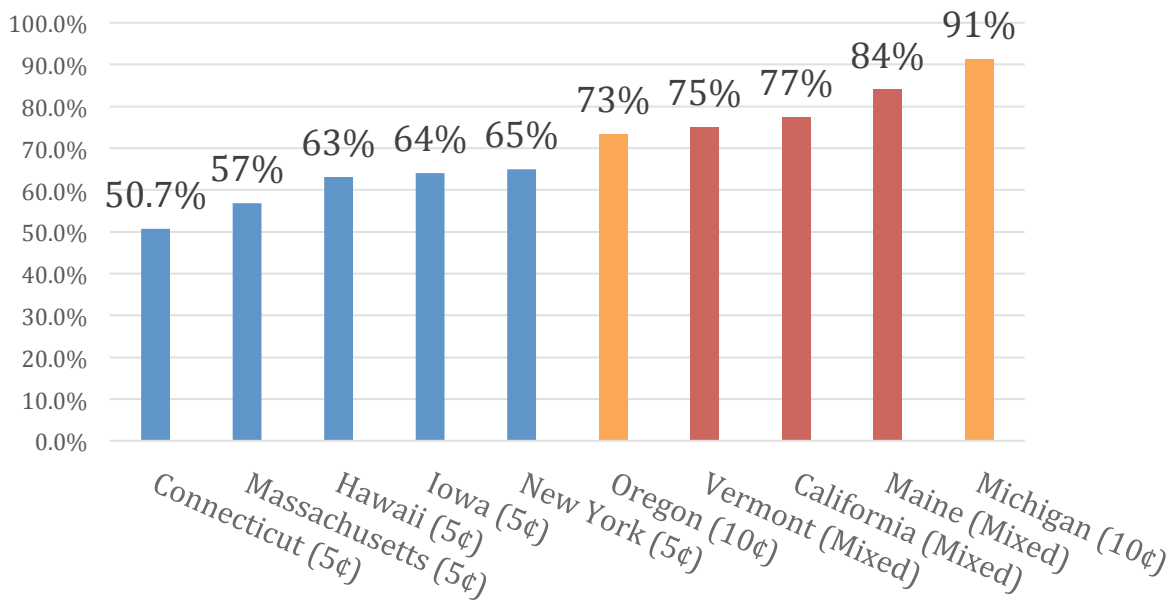
Sixty percent of the weight of these beverage containers is glass. This expansion to these four new beverage types would help the state recover more glass, and would help municipal recycling programs that are currently finding glass recycling challenging.

There is ample precedent for putting deposits on non-carbonated beverages, and even wine and liquor. The U.S. deposit states of Maine, Hawaii, Oregon and California have all successfully incorporated a wide range of non-alcoholic, non-carbonated beverages to their deposit laws (like juice, tea, sports drinks, etc.) Vermont has a deposit on liquor, while, Iowa and Maine have deposits on liquor and wine.

Regarding the handling fee increase, CRI supports modest, measured increases in handling fees, and also a uniform handling fee for all beverage types.

Increasing the deposit value from 5¢ to 10¢ will improve redemption rates in Connecticut. *Connecticut currently has the lowest redemption rate of any U.S. state*, and indeed, has the lowest redemption rate of more than 50 programs in the world. Michigan has a 10¢ deposit and a 91% redemption rate. In 2017, Oregon's deposit value was increased from 5¢ to 10¢, and the redemption rate rose from 64% in 2016 to nearly 90% in early 2019.

2017 Redemption Rate for Bottle Bill States



More than 26,000 tons of beverage containers (glass, plastic and aluminum) are generated annually in Connecticut from the juice, sports drinks, energy drinks and tea -- that is a lot of material for local taxpayers to manage via municipally-funded curbside recycling, or trash pickup and landfilling. The latter—landfilling—is much more prevalent. **The vast majority of non-deposit, non-carbonated beverage containers sold are wasted:** not recycled, but rather landfilled or littered. Specifically, we estimate that the non-deposit, non-carbonated beverage container recycling rates are as low as 12% for glass, 18% for PET plastic, and 46% for aluminum cans. ***We estimate that about 16,000 tons of non-deposit glass, 10,000 tons of non-deposit plastic, and 700 tons of non-deposit aluminum cans are wasted in Connecticut annually (from energy, sports, juice and tea drinks only).***

Cities and towns would benefit financially from these non-carbonated beverages to the deposit system, because their collection and processing costs for both recycling and trash collection and disposal would go down.

Municipalities will also save money on litter cleanup costs if non-carbonated beverages, and wine and spirits, are brought into the deposit system. Many wasted containers end up as litter along roadways, beaches, streams, parks and other public places, posing both an aesthetic nuisance and a financial cost to taxpayers for cleanup. CRI estimates that ***the current bottle bill saves Connecticut taxpayers and private businesses \$2.3 million annually in avoided litter abatement costs.*** If non-carbonated beverages are brought into the deposit system, ***those savings are projected to increase by \$200,000 per year.***

Adding non-carbonated beverages would be a boon to glass recycling. Glass recycling is challenging for some communities in Connecticut, because single-stream curbside recycling programs produce mixed-color, broken, and contaminated glass that has a low value. Glass from single-stream programs can cost as much as \$20/ton to recycle—when markets can be found for it at all—versus clean, separated deposit glass that has a \$20/ton *positive* scrap value.

Replacing those wasted bottles and cans with new ones made from virgin materials produces **about 19,000 tons of greenhouse gas emissions**, and other forms of pollution, resource depletion, and

ecosystem damage. That level of greenhouse gas emission is equivalent to the annual emissions of about 3,800 cars.

We urge caution on increasing the radius for redemption centers from one mile to five miles: *that's a 25-fold increase.* A one-mile radius covers only 3.14 square miles while a five-mile radius covers an area of 78 square miles -- more than 4 times the size of Hartford (at 18 square miles.) If there is an increase in the radius, it should be far more modest.

For all of these reasons, we are generally supportive of HB 7294, if amended. Increasing the deposit and expanding to new beverage types would strengthen the Connecticut container deposit program: the most effective recycling program in the state. Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments. Please contact me with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Susan Collins". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Susan" being larger and more prominent than the last name "Collins".

Susan Collins
President, Container Recycling Institute

About the Container Recycling Institute: CRI is a nonprofit organization and a leading authority on the economic and environmental impacts of beverage containers and other consumer-product packaging.