Testimony of  
Curt Bucey, Executive Vice President, Chief Commercial Officer  
Strategic Materials, Inc.  
before the  
Connecticut Environment Committee  
H.B. No. 7294 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING BOTTLE REDEMPTION IN THE STATE  
and  
H.B. No. 7296 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECYCLING OF GLASS  
March 11, 2019  

Senator Cohen, Representative DeMicco, Senator Kushner, Representative Gresko, Senator Miner, Representative Harding and distinguished members of the Environment Committee:  

My name is Curt Bucey and I am Executive Vice President and Chief Commercial Officer of Strategic Materials, Inc. (SMI). The following testimony is in support HB 7294 An Act Concerning Bottle Redemption in the State. This bill seeks to modernize the Connecticut deposit system by expanding the containers covered under the bottle bill, raising the handling fee from the current 1.5¢ on beer and 2¢ on carbonated soft drinks and water to up to 3.5¢ for beer and 4.5¢ on all deposit beverages.  

SMI supports this critical effort to increase the level of Connecticut’s handling fees in statute, which have not been updated since the start of the redemption program almost thirty years ago. These fees reimburse the various redemption centers and grocery stores who ensure proper collection of these materials so that the container materials retain their quality to be sold to end markets. Connecticut’s current handling fees are set significantly lower than other states, which has put economic pressure on the availability of this critical container collection service.  

SMI also further supports expansion of the bottle bill to include teas and juices not currently covered by the program. Like so many other elements of the bottle bill, these new beverage containers have escaped inclusion due to the lack of recent updates. SMI encourages the Committee to also embrace Governor Lamont’s proposal to expand the bottle deposit program to include wine and liquor bottles. According to the CT DEEP, sixty percent of the glass in curbside recycling are wine and liquor bottles. Given the collapse in the recycling markets recently, single stream programs that commingle glass with paper, cardboard, plastic and aluminum only serve to increase contamination and produce low quality glass, unsuitable for recycling into new glass containers and most often used as low value landfill cover and aggregate.  

SMI is North America’s largest and most comprehensive glass recycler, with nearly 50 locations in the United States and Canada, including a facility located in South Windsor, Connecticut, which employs nearly 50 people. At our facility we primarily receive glass through the bottle
bill, and recycle it to make new products, diverting the material from landfills and incineration plants. We also receive plastic, aluminum, and cardboard for recycling.

**SMI’s recycling process depends on a steady stream of high-quality diverted glass from the bottle bill.** The quality of “deposit glass” acquired via the bottle bill is far superior to curbside glass, making reprocessing costs low. Therefore, SMI is willing to pay for the material, and have done just that for many years. SMI accepts nearly 75,000 tons of deposit glass from the State of Connecticut annually, providing the highest value to the state, and can accommodate all the deposit glass that modernization of the bottle bill in Connecticut can produce.

SMI strongly supports HB 7294 as an important step in updating Connecticut’s bottle bill to result in high redemption rates and superior material quality. SMI further supports expansion to containers not currently included under the deposit program, especially wine and liquor bottles, as proposed by the Governor.

SMI does not support HB 7296 *An Act Concerning the Recycling of Glass* at this time. Although SMI is encouraged that there is interest in understanding various collection methods for glass, it is clear from worldwide experience that bottle redemption programs work best at preserving glass quality and preventing value-reducing contamination. In addition, the Housatonic Resources Recovery Authority (HRRA) is undertaking a glass drop-off program with which SMI is involved and participating. That pilot is still underway and will produce data for the state to consider. Given the proven effectiveness of the bottle bill, combined with the many other recycling issues Connecticut – and much of the United States – are currently experiencing, SMI believes that adding another layer of study at this time would not be the best use of limited DEEP staffing.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments and for your consideration.

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