Testimony Submitted by Commissioner Katie S. Dykes

**HB 7294 – An Act Concerning Bottle Redemption in the State**

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding HB 7294 – An Act Concerning Bottle Redemption in the State. This bill amends the bottle bill statutes to increase handling fees, redistribute escheats from unredeemed bottles, include additional beverage containers in the redemption system, encourage additional independent redemption centers, increase the redemption value of such containers, and establish a goal for the recycling of such containers.

The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) supports this bill because it makes significant positive changes to the deposit system that are likely to increase the amount of material that is recovered and successfully recycled. Connecticut’s bottle bill, although it remains an important recycling and litter-reduction program, is in need of modernization. According to data compiled by the Container Recycling Institute, the Connecticut redemption system has the lowest redemption rate for any bottle bill state, with only about 50 percent of containers being redeemed. This poor performance can be attributed to factors that are addressed by this bill: the relatively small number of redemption centers, the deposit value, and the handling fee.

The most effective bottle bill programs (e.g., Oregon) are those with a robust network of redemption centers that are convenient for consumers to utilize. In Connecticut, the number of redemption centers has been shrinking, primarily due to the low handling fee (a portion of the deposit value) which has not been increased since the bottle bill program was launched. To reinvigorate the bottle bill program, the handling fee should be increased. With a robust network of redemption centers in place, Connecticut would be in a better position to utilize a “redemption zone” approach, which could provide relief to some retailers that are currently required by law to redeem containers.

An increase of the current $0.05 deposit to $0.10 would also make the program more effective and help to increase redemption rate. States with a $0.10 deposit typically see redemption rates of over 80 percent – well above Connecticut’s current redemption rate.

DEEP also supports the inclusion of additional product categories in the bottle bill, as it will lead to higher rates of recovery for recycling. Although our curbside recycling system can accept containers of all types, recent market changes have significantly increased the cost of curbside recycling. In addition, the deposit system has demonstrated results that are superior to mixed curbside recycling, as it recovers clean and source-separated materials that can more readily and economically be recycled.

DEEP urges the Committee to support the Governor’s budget proposal (SB 877), which includes language that would add wine and spirits to the bottle bill. DEEP supports the addition of wine
and spirits because these products account for a large percentage of the glass containers that burden our curbside recycling system, where their management is costly and little of the material is successfully recycled. A bottle redemption framework for wine and spirits would increase the recycling rate of those types of bottles, improve the market for glass in recycling, and reduce the burden on recycling facilities that suffer from broken glass contaminating other potentially recyclable material. The Governor’s proposal also addresses “nip” bottles, which are a common litter item.

In sum, DEEP supports HB 7294 as well as the inclusion of wine and spirits as called for by the Governor.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on this proposal. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Mandi Careathers, the Department’s legislative liaison, at Mandi.Careathers@ct.gov.