Testimony
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The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) **supports HB-7294**, which strengthens opportunities for recycling by enhancing the state’s bottle deposit program.

Municipalities are working hard to meet the goals of the Comprehensive Materials Management Strategy (CMMS), which requires the diversion and/or recycling of at least 60% of the solid waste generated in the state by 2024. Unfortunately, meeting this goal is challenging, particularly given China’s decision to no longer accept any more recyclable materials from the United States.

Towns are now faced with new, unanticipated costs for recycling, which had, in previous years, generated much-needed revenues. However, it continues to be cheaper to recycle bottles and other materials than to dispose of those items as part of the regular trash stream.

HB-7294 will help promote more recycling by extending the state’s bottle deposit laws to include juice, tea, sports and energy drink containers and by increasing the bottle deposit from 5 cents to 10 cents. Providing a strong incentive for the collection and recycling of bottles will also help produce a cleaner stream of recyclables, which will increase the value of the recycled materials. In addition, it will help reduce litter in our communities.

The bill also increases the handling fees, which will go a long way in assisting dealers and operators in keeping redemption centers open. Unfortunately, due to low handling fees, many redemption centers have closed, making it less convenient to recycle bottles.

Accordingly, COST urges lawmakers to **support HB-7294**.

COST’s Legislative Platform, which was approved by the membership at our annual meeting, also includes **support** for efforts to reduce the number of plastic bags in our waste stream, as called for in **SB-1003**, which phases in a ban on single-use plastic and paper bags over the next two years; and **HB-5019**, which establishes a 5 cent tax on single use plastic and paper bags.

Plastic bags inadvertently tossed in the recycle bins create significant problems with recycling trucks and facilities as well as decreasing the overall value of the recycled materials. Local public works personnel, who are already stretched thin, must spend time and resources collecting bags that litter our parks, school grounds, and roadways. They also pose concerns for the environment and wildlife.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on these issues.

*Founded in 1975, COST is the state’s only organization dedicated exclusively to advocating on behalf of the interests of Connecticut’s smaller towns.*