Dear Senator Cohen and Representative Demicco, and the entire Environment Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to write to you about HB 7294, An Act Concerning Bottle Redemption in Connecticut, on which you are scheduled to have a public hearing on Monday, March 11, 2019.

The bottle bill represents a wonderful opportunity to increase recycling and reduce waste in the state of Connecticut. It also happens to bring in tens of millions of dollars to the state’s general fund each year in unclaimed bottle deposits, some $35 million in 2017, according to the Department of Revenue Services.

The bottle bill was enacted in 1978 with a 5 cent deposit and it has not increased since then. Accounting just for inflation, today the deposit on each bottle should be at least 20 cents. But times have changed and single-use drink containers have exploded in popularity. The trail of waste they leave behind is costing the state more to manage, and the costs of recycling are much higher now too.

In New London, where I live and work, there are single-use glass, plastic, and canned drink containers littered extensively along every street. Each week, these containers blow along the streets, into people’s yards, into the city’s stormwater drains, clogging the system, and ultimately making their way into the Thames River and the Long Island Sound, where we expect people to vacation and swim. The daily tide of these containers on a local level is truly a nightmare. Internationally, the United Nations Environment Assembly estimates that we dump some 4.8 to 12.7 million tonnes of plastic into the world’s oceans each year.

HB 7294 is a tool that can help us respond to this disgusting, gigantic problem efficiently and effectively. Please revise the bill to establish a rate of deposit at no less than 20 cents per beverage container, though personally I would start with a nice round deposit of 25 cents per container and move up from there. If every drink container had a 25 cent deposit value, I believe we would see our streets cleared entirely of all drink containers. And there would be a tremendous rush on recycling like we maybe have not seen before in this country.

The other major area in which the bill can be improved beyond the rate of deposit is in its scope. I have noticed HB 7294 now includes juice, teas, and sports or energy drinks, which were not previously covered by the bottle bill. But it needs to go even further to include wine and spirits, and here I am thinking especially of the little, extremely popular, one-shot nip containers that are ubiquitous in the streets and parks and along the coastline of southeastern Connecticut.
The bottle bill is a great piece of legislative accomplishment that distinguishes the state of Connecticut from all of the other many states that have no such similar law. With HB 7294 now before the Environment Committee, this is our chance to take something that is working well in the state and make it even better. I urge you to seize this moment and make Connecticut a leader in increasing recycling, reducing waste, and improving the quality of our environment.

Please revise HB 7294 to set the bottle deposit to at least 20 cents per container, and let’s make sure it applies not just to juice, tea, and sports or energy drinks, but also to wine and spirits in all sizes large and small.

Thank you again for considering my suggestions on improving this bill.

Sincerely,

Andrew Lopez
286 Montauk Ave.
New London, CT 06320
NDRW.LPZ@gmail.com