The Connecticut Chapter of the National Waste and Recycling Association is a trade association representing private sector commercial and residential recycling and waste companies and the materials recovery plants they own and operate. Our industry is a mix of local, regional and national companies that compete vigorously in providing environmentally protective and cost effective services to our customers – the citizens, communities and businesses of the state. Private sector waste and recycling companies collect a majority of recyclables at the curbside and the loading docks in this country.

According to data compiled by NWRA, in CT, the private waste and recycling industry employs nearly 5,500 people. The annual economic impact to the CT state economy, generated by the waste and recycling industry, is $1.9 billion. When the activity of the waste and recycling industry and their involvement with other industries is calculated, the waste and recycling industry’s overall impact to CT’s economy is $3.7 billion annually. We strongly support efforts to increase recycling that make environmental and economic sense. We have participated in previous DEEP workgroups and task forces on solid waste management and recycling and we look forward to continuing our collaborative work together to keep Connecticut on the nation’s top ten leaders list in recycling and waste diversion programs.

We submit this testimony in opposition and support to certain parts of the following three bills:

HB 7298 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE PERMITTING FOR CERTAIN SOLID WASTE FACILITIES AND THE DESIGNATION OF RECYCLABLE ITEMS.

This bill will turn the recycling industry upside down and will not achieve the expected results. It will allow municipalities and regional authorities to disregard CT’s list of mandated recyclables and create a new list based on what they believe should be recycled. This would allow towns to dispose of mandated recyclables in MSW which will be a huge blow to WTE capacity which is already insufficient to handle all the MSW generated in CT. What happens to the material that is not recovered? – it will likely be disposed in the MSW.

NWRA supports incentivizing the development of the domestic market for recycled materials through the use of waivers, federal tax credits, grants from the Environmental Protection Agency for entrepreneurs and other voluntary methods. CT haulers handle CT’s recyclables by collecting, processing and then transferring the material to markets both national and worldwide. CT’s market, although smaller than other larger states, does have an impact on markets. Post-consumer or post- generator recovered recyclable commodities require local
collection and MRF processing infrastructure; and some markets may be nearby or in-state. However, this is not the case for “all” or even “many” of the after useful life discards we collect and clean-up and market as commodities for reuse and recycling.

In Connecticut, the collection and processing of recyclable waste into materials that can be used in the manufacture of new products is now routine and CT has a robust, efficient infrastructure that collects, markets and processes their recyclables. Recycling turns the old into the new – today’s newspaper might return next month with new headlines while your aluminum soda can, which is made from the most recyclable of all materials, could have a second life as a new beverage container. CT’s material recovery facilities (MRFs) have a wide array of highly-specialized equipment that cost several millions of dollars, designed to sort and separate recyclables, turning them into raw materials for manufacturers. Most MRFs process several different grades of paper, glass bottles, aluminum, steel cans, and plastic containers.

Despite what many may be led to believe, the State of Connecticut, year after year, is considered one of the ten best recyclers in the entire nation by Waste360.¹ It has achieved this goal due to the commitment of the General Assembly and the private waste industry. CT has an excellent in-state recycling collection and processing capacity and facilities. Presently, the foreign markets are re-grouping and evaluating future steps. So, for the short term, foreign markets are constrained. The current recycling headwinds, however, will subside.

**HB 7294 - AN ACT CONCERNING BOTTLE REDEMPTION IN THE STATE.**

NWRA does not support expansion of the bottle bill to containers for sports drinks, juices and teas. A majority of these products are made of recyclable plastic and metal containers (generally, aluminum). Plastic and metal containers are essential to the economic viability of the CT recycling industry since we are able to market these plastic recyclables in the secondary markets. Simply put, these CT materials represent an important and strong revenue stream to our industry which allows the industry to be the strong economic driver that it is. To encourage the removal of metal and plastic from the recycling stream will cause substantial harm to the curbside collection hauling businesses and the recycling processors in CT. CT is a leader because these CT businesses provide independent services to CT’s schools and businesses. In order to remove more glass from the “blue-cart” recycling bins, NWRA believes that an option could be the expansion of the bottle bill to include wine and liquor bottles which are made primarily of glass. Glass contaminates other blue cart recyclables and creates problems for recycling equipment and most glass placed in the blue recycling carts is contaminated before it is collected.

The Legislature’s 2017 *Task Force to Study Methods for Reducing Consumer Packaging that Generates Solid Waste* met many times during 2017 and filed its recommendations with the General Assembly in January 2018. This Task Force, comprised of industry experts, recommended, among other things, that the dedication of bottle bill escheats should be diverted into specific local programs to support recycling. These proposals, although generating some controversy, do allow us an opportunity to commence a discussion about the State’s container redemption law now that it has reached the age of 30 years. Much has happened in our industry to contribute to the success that Connecticut historically enjoys, and it is prudent to examine the

¹ Serves 90,000+ professionals worldwide, and is the leading information, event, commerce and education provider to the solid waste, recycling, organics and sustainable communities and plays a critical role in connecting industry professionals worldwide.
bottle bill in its entirety to determine how it might best support the universal goals of recycling for the next 30 years.

Removing plastic and aluminum from any deposit bottle bill system would steer the product into existing residential curbside programs, drop off programs and commercial recycling programs. This will enable the private hauling industry and the private MRFs to continue to be economically viable so that they can continue to help Connecticut be a top 10 recycler. By keeping all glass containers in a deposit system and out of the recycling facilities, the life and effectiveness of the equipment inside recycling plants will be extended due to less wear and tear from broken glass and related residue. Injuries from glass represent a danger to employees on collection routes and inside recycling centers. Recycling glass through the bottle bill system will keep glass out of the recycling centers and protect workers. Municipalities will receive recycling rebates from processors because there will be less contamination of other recyclables. Removing bottle bill glass containers from their recycling bins, and adding the other new containers no longer covered by the bottle bill in their recycling bins, will reduce contamination and will improve the value and marketability of recovered recyclables for both processors and municipalities.

H.B. No. 7295 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING A RECYCLING PROGRAM FOR PAPER AND PACKAGING AND REQUIRING CERTAIN MUNICIPAL SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT GOALS.

Chaz Miller from NWRA is testifying to the concerns in the bill with issues relating to EPR. However, we have concern with the requirement in Sec 2. Towns are currently required to try to recycle at least 25% of their municipal solid waste, and now it is being proposed that the requirement be increased to 700 lbs for each residential source by 2022 and then 500lbs by 2024. Where do these numbers come from? DEEP has supported a recycling goal of 60% by 2024 which is an unrealistic goal especially when the recycling markets constrict like they currently are. We also don’t believe there is an accurate figure of what percentage of total MSW is residential in the 2015 DEEP Waste Characterization Study. The best figure in the study comes from the waste collected at MIRA because the material is flow-controlled from the area towns and even that sampling is done on too few trucks so it might not be as accurate. DEEP data shows through 2014 that the amount of waste generated per person was likely 1,400 lbs per person but that includes commercial and residential. DEEP has already sent letters to towns in 2019 that aren’t meeting recycling goals and that the only way to increase recycling is to implement some DEEP endorsed practices (EPR, PayT) which NWRA does not believe will achieve the results hoped in the short or long-term. Recycling markets ebb and flow and policy changes need to be looked at carefully before implementing programs that might not solve the problems without creating new ones.