Monday, March 11, 2019

Testimony To The Connecticut General Assembly’s Committee on Environment

Regarding Raised House Bill 7294
Chuck Riegle, SVP Governmental Affairs & Compliance for TOMRA North America

Good morning Co-Chairs Cohen and Demicco and Members of the Committee. My name is Chuck Riegle and I am the SVP Governmental Affairs and Compliance for TOMRA North America which is headquartered in Shelton, CT. I am representing TOMRA and to some extent ENVIPCO, headquartered in Naugatuck, CT, who both administer and operate deposit-return systems.

I have worked in the field of recycling for almost 30 years – first as the municipal recycling coordinator for the City of Norwalk in the 1990’s setting up their original curbside programs; then joining TOMRA working with stakeholders to understand how deposit-return systems work – and how they might be modernized.

TOMRA, appreciates the historic and continuing support of the legislature for the “bottle bill”. The positive impact on the reduction in litter from Connecticut’s roads, parks and beaches, as well as the resulting contribution towards real recycling, cannot be understated.

I have come before the Committee in the past to express our support for Connecticut’s ‘Bottle Bill’ when there were proposals for its repeal - today I’m here to re-affirm our industry’s support for the law and our desire to work with you and other stakeholders through questions and proposals to amend the program.

For your consideration – I have included some visualization of the redemption process and our role in it.

Deposit-Return Process

Technology and Services Provide by TOMRA and Other Connecticut Companies
COMPANY BRIEFING

TOMRA creates sensor-based technology for companies to optimize their production processes.

You know us two ways. The Reverse Vending Machine (RVM) found at grocery and package stores used daily by consumers; and the high-speed optical sorters used in Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs) around the world to sort curbside material.

TOMRA invented the Reverse Vending Machine for retailers 45 years ago and is now the world leader with over 82,000 installations across more than 60 markets – including all 10 U.S. states with deposit laws; and 4,800 optical sorters used by MRFs for sorting.

This program engages 1,272 jobs throughout our state and $92 million annually in Gross Value Added to the local economy. Beverage retailers and brand owners, and also redemption centers have come to rely on Reverse Vending technology to help consumers redeem their deposits and begin the recycling process. Along with our competitor ENVIPCO, we have invested in a collection infrastructure of almost 2,000 RVMs that spans across the state.

SHARING BEST PRACTICES

Globally, there has been a boom in the debate of deposit-return policy as an extension of a desire to curb single-use plastics pollution. There are also a few markets which have launched and updated their programs.

Oregon: where by reinvesting the unredeemed deposits, they have worked to guarantee consumer access to redemption while also update its program much like Connecticut is considering. These updates occurred between 2011 and 2018 – and the results are available today for us to learn from.

New South Wales and Queensland, Australia. TOMRA is participating in those markets as well – where the RVM network is put online with data available to improve accountability and operational efficiencies.

Consider too the growing adoption of deposit policy in the UK and EU states – both our companies are active in their development – and can share our learnings here at home.

DEPOSIT SYSTEM FRAMEWORK

Connecticut’s Bottle Bill is not living up to its potential. As you consider ways to ‘modernize’ it for the next two decades, we hope you will appreciate the complexity of the program and how each amendment is tied to other aspects of the program.
Any changes should tie back to these framing conditions for a well-run system:

- Performance
- Convenience
- Accountability
- Efficiency

Consider how each proposal:

- Serves the program’s target
- Engages the public in a meaningful way
- Makes it as easy for the public to redeem containers as they purchased beverages
- Compensates both Retailers and Redemption Centers for the services they provide
- Removes the chance for fraud by increasing accounting controls
- Clarifies administration of the system
- Harmonizes with other states where possible
- Preserves material quality to supply a circular economy

Thank you for your consideration.

Charles W. Riegle Jr.
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