



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 1037
AN ACT CONCERNING SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT
March 18, 2021

To: Honored Chairs Sen. Cohen and Rep. Gresko and Distinguished Members of the Environment Committee

From: Megan Macomber, Connecticut League of Conservation Voters

On behalf of the Connecticut League of Conservation Voters, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony **IN SUPPORT of SB 1037** to address modernizing Connecticut's container deposit law (known as the Bottle Bill).

The Bottle Bill law provides incentive for consumers to recycle their beverage containers, thereby reducing litter throughout the state and keeping recyclable bottle containers out of landfills and incinerators. Despite inflation and increased redemption facility costs, the **Bottle Bill has not been updated since its original drafting in 1978**. The 3.5 cent handling fee has forced many redemption centers to close their doors, and the once attractive 5 cent deposit is no longer a sufficient incentive for many consumers.

In 1978 the beverage market was a fraction of what it is now. Beverages like coffee, tea, sports drinks and juices are excluded from our container deposit law. **According to the Container Recycling Institute (CRI), CT could capture 416 million more containers each year by expanding the accepted containers under the bottle deposit program.**

SB 1037 has a performance target for wine and liquor recycling, which will have a significant role in diverting more containers from our waste stream. **Connecticut municipalities pay to dispose of up to 16,000 tons of these non-deposit glass containers per year**. Putting a deposit on more glass containers will help shrink our solid waste and prevent these broken bottles from contaminating our recycling stream.

Redemption centers across the state are struggling to keep their doors open. Increasing the handling fee to 3.5 cents will ensure these facilities can keep up with rising operation costs and continue to provide recycling services in Connecticut. An increased handling fee will also make opening a redemption center more attractive, and having more of these small businesses around the state will provide good green jobs to our residents and increase access to redeem the deposit.

Redemption centers are geographically scattered and infrequently sited in urban areas. A modernized bottle bill must include public education on the increased deposit, and how and where to return bottles and cans so that we do not inadvertently penalize our most vulnerable communities that may lack convenient redemption locations. Including Reverse Vending Machines (RVMs) in chain retailers across the state is an important step in ensuring that the bottle bill is modernized equitably.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for modernization. Redemption centers remained open as mandatory business while grocery stores shut down their bottle return rooms, making it nearly impossible for residents claim their deposits. **The increase in bottle sales paired with the decrease in returns caused CT's redemption rate to fall below 45% in 2020, costing consumers \$10 million in unclaimed deposits.**

An expansion of the bottle redemption program is popular among CT voters. According to a poll conducted in January 2019 by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research, **81% of voters in Connecticut support expanding the state's bottle deposit program to include all recyclable containers**, including 64% of voters who strongly support the expansion.

CTLCV urges the committee to **SUPPORT HB 1037** in order to keep vital recycling facilities operating, prevent litter, create good green jobs, and increase CT's recycling rates to compete with the best performing states in the country.

CTLCV Briefing Papers on the Bottle Bill and on Glass Recycling can be found on our Website at <https://www.ctlcv.org/2021-watchlist.html>

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

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