



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF **HB 7294**
AN ACT CONCERNING BOTTLE REDEMPTION IN THE STATE

March 7, 2019

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

From: Lori Brown, Connecticut League of Conservation Voters

Thank you for the opportunity to testify **IN SUPPORT of HB 7294**, An Act Concerning Bottle Redemption in the State.

Connecticut's refundable container deposit (or landmark "Bottle Bill") is a tried and tested method of **incentivizing recycling and keeping our communities and open spaces clean from litter**. Since it was first implemented in 1980, the program has succeeded in recycling millions of tons of bottles, while simultaneously creating millions in cost-savings for taxpayers who would otherwise have to pay for littering and municipal clean-ups.

The Bottle Bill works by imposing a small deposit on a container at the time of purchase, which the consumer fully recovers if they recycle the container. The beverage distributor pays a handling fee to the retail store or redemption center for processing the returned containers. If the container is not recycled, the unredeemed deposit is instead paid to the State. **Connecticut collected an average of \$29.2 million per year from 2010 to 2016 due to the Bottle Bill.**

Despite its success, **the Bottle Bill must be improved**. Redemption centers, where bottles are brought to be recycled, have not seen an increase in pay per bottle in over 35 years, despite inflation, minimum wage increases, and increased overhead. Redemption centers and retailers in Connecticut are paid just 1.5 cents for every beer and malt liquor container, while soda and water containers are worth just 2 cents.

Redemption centers face rising costs just to keep their doors open, and the low fees they receive for containers can no longer cover the storage and processing of bottles they collect. As a result, **many redemption centers from across the state have been forced to close**. Four years ago, there were twenty-one redemption centers in Connecticut. Now there are only sixteen. More will continue to shutter and close if we do not act, leaving residents without a convenient place to return their bottles, and likely resulting in more plastics in landfills and waterways.

All other Northeastern states have higher handling fees. As a result, they also enjoy higher recycling rates.

Additionally, our current deposit law is limited to beer, carbonated soft drinks (including mineral waters and soda waters), and noncarbonated beverages (including plain, flavored and enhanced water.) But changes in products and consumer preferences show the need **to expand the bottle deposit to juices, teas, sports drinks, and energy drinks**.

HB 7294 promises to remedy these issues and improve the bottle deposit program by increasing the handling fee for redemption centers to 3.5 cents for beer and malt beverages and to 4.5 cents for all others beverages. The redemption fee for consumers would also increase from 5 cents to 10 cents, while the types of beverages eligible for redemption would expand to include juices, tea, sports drinks and energy drinks.

When Connecticut passed the Bottle Bill, we established ourselves as a leader in the fight for sustainability. Expanding and improving it today will once again put our state on a cleaner, brighter path. We at CTLCV urge you to **VOTE YES on HB 7294**.

Thank you for your consideration as you deliberate on this important matter.

Sincerely,



Lori Brown
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