



COALITION PRESS STATEMENT

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The CT House and Senate have passed S.B. 1037: An Act Concerning Solid Waste Management. Our organizations have long supported bottle bill modernization and are pleased that S.B. 1037 included important updates to Connecticut's container deposit law.

We acknowledge and appreciate the efforts of the bill cosponsors and leadership in the House and Senate, who have recognized the need to modernize this important litter prevention program and worked tirelessly to get important updates to the bottle bill passed into law.

As passed, S.B. 1037 includes the following measures:

1. The bill raises the handling fees paid by beverage distributors to support the redemption network;
2. Expands the program to include non-carbonated beverages (i.e., juices, teas, and sports drinks), hard ciders and hard seltzer beverages (effective January 2023);
3. Raises the refundable beverage container deposit from 5 cents to 10 cents, to strengthen the incentive to recycle discarded beverage containers (effective January 2024).

In addition to these critical updates, an important budget provision is expected to pass during the special budget session, which will establish a grant program to help women and minority entrepreneurs open new redemption centers in underserved areas.

Our organizations support these reforms, which are the product of months-long negotiations and compromise with beverage and recycling industry stakeholders. These changes are essential to enhance consumer convenience, increase container redemption and recycling rates, and keep cans and bottles out of our environment and out of the waste stream.

We are, nonetheless, concerned that the version of S.B. 1037 which passed both chambers included a last-minute amendment which threatens to give unilateral control of the deposit return system to beverage distributors who have fought for decades to undermine and even eliminate Connecticut's container deposit law. Such unilateral control threatens to undermine the public interest in favor of corporate interests.

Section 9 of the bill creates an organization of beverage industry stakeholders, to facilitate future changes to the container deposit program. This organization would be required to submit a plan to DEEP, to transition to a new program overseen by beverage distributors. This is especially concerning, given that the bill gives a large portion of unredeemed deposits to distributors. This could create a financial incentive to collect and recycle fewer beverage containers, and it highlights the need for safeguards to ensure the integrity of Connecticut's bottle bill is protected moving forward.

The requirements of Sec. 9 fall short of establishing a true stewardship model in several key respects. S.B. 1037 fails to provide DEEP with explicit authority to reject or modify any plan that fails to meet important performance targets, nor does it require the plan to go through periodic review and renewal. Further, it provides no assurance that the state's existing redemption infrastructure would be maintained and built upon over time.

An effective stewardship organization would involve, at a minimum:

- A competitive bidding process.
- Robust oversight and accountability metrics.
- Clear enforcement provisions and penalties for failures to meet the 80% redemption target
- Meaningful opportunities for input from the public and other stakeholders.
- Independently audited financial statements to be provided to DEEP annually and posted publicly on the DEEP website.
- Annual reports to be submitted to DEEP regarding the disposition of all materials collected through the program, ensuring that all materials are recycled to their highest and best use.

These are essential components of a working stewardship model. Our organizations intend to monitor this process closely, to ensure that the legislature and the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection preserve the spirit and intent of Connecticut's Bottle Bill and that a modernized, convenient, and effective deposit return system is realized in the coming years.

We look forward to working towards this goal, and to the continual improvement of Connecticut's container deposit system.

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