



TESTIMONY SUPPORTING THE BIGGER BETTER BOTTLE BILL (S.237/A.6353)  
Joint Committee on Environmental Conservation Hearing  
October 23, 2023

My name is Jane Selden. I'm the co-chair of WasteNøt, a 350NYC working group focused on reducing plastic pollution, minimizing food waste, and advocating for universal composting. As a climate activist group, 350NYC recognizes that the world can't achieve its greenhouse emission reduction goals without seriously addressing the cradle-to-grave environmental impact of the single-use plastic. If plastics were a country, it would be the fifth largest emitter of greenhouse gases in the world.

The sourcing, production and disposal of plastic not only contributes to the climate crisis, but has a disproportionate impact on the health of low-income communities and communities of color who live near fracking sites, petrochemical plants, waste transfer stations, landfills, and incinerators. **To reduce the current overproduction of virgin plastic and increase the amount of waste diverted from landfills and incinerators, we urgently need strong Extended Producer Responsibility legislation that holds companies financially responsible for the plastic waste they produce. For this reason, 350NYC strongly supports the new improved Bottle Bill and looks forward to its passage.**

The NY Bottle Bill, passed in 1982, has proven to be a successful example of Extended Producer Responsibility policy. Placing a value, in the form of a refund deposit, on beverage containers incentivizes recycling, produces high quality, truly recyclable material, and keeps beverage containers out of the waste stream and off our streets. However, it's time for this bill to be modernized and expanded. The new Bigger, Better Bottle Bill expands the types of containers to include wine, liquor, cider, "nips," and most non-carbonated beverages, and increases the deposit fee from five-cents to ten-cents. States like Michigan, Oregon and Maine that have higher fees have substantially higher rates of returns. In New York, the return rate is currently 64%; in Michigan, which has a ten-cent deposit, the return rate is an impressive 89%.

Increasing the rate of return to redemption centers and stores will also reduce greenhouse emissions, not only by diverting more beverage containers from landfill and incinerators, but by enabling more closed loop recycling of aluminum, glass, and PET plastic containers. When beverage bottles are deposited in curbside recycling bins, there is a much greater chance for contamination and glass breakage than when they are returned to stores and redemption centers. When more containers are returned uncontaminated, there is more recyclable material. Creating new products from recycled material requires much less energy than producing them from virgin material.

Motivating more consumers to return beverage containers would also reduce the litter that is an all-too-common sight in New York City streets. This street trash is more than just an eyesore; it clogs our drainage system, exacerbating the flooding on our streets and in our subways from torrential rains. Because of global heating, we can expect that these extreme weather events will occur even more frequently.

Finally, this legislation will also directly benefit the thousands of “canners” in New York City who supplement their income by collecting empty containers and bringing them to stores and redemption centers. Canners are generally low-income undocumented immigrants, people experiencing homelessness, women, and the elderly. Forty years after the original Bottle Bill passed -- at time when the minimum wage was \$3.15 an hour -- they are still being paid the same redemption fee. These canners provide an important service to New York City and deserve a raise.

Thank you.

Jane Selden  
Co-Chair, WasteNøt/350NYC