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**Testimony for October 23, 2023**

**Public Hearing on Proposed Expansion of the Bottle Bill**

**S237B – May      A6353 – Glick**

We submit this testimony on behalf of our long-standing client the Metropolitan Package Store Association (Metro). While Metro is always supportive of ways to improve our environment, we have long stated that the well-intentioned idea of adding wine and spirits to the Bottle Bill is unworkable for our mom-and-pop stores and would put their (very) small businesses in an untenable position.

Metro is the retail liquor store association that represents all of the stores in the City of New York, Long Island, Westchester, and Rockland. We represent approximately 2,500 of the 3,500 stores in all of New York. Most of these stores are mom-and-pop stores. Many of them have been held in the same family for generations. The original owners are often first-generation immigrants.

First, our mom-and-pop stores are simply not large enough to store empty bottles. The stores that we represent are often less than 1,000 square feet in size. Even larger stores have cases of product stacked everywhere all the way to the ceiling due to the lack of space. There is simply no room to store bags or cartons of empties. For the same reasons, there is no room for a returnable machine.

Second, the Mayor of New York and other downstate municipalities have rightly declared war on rodents. They are a growing scourge in our urban and suburban areas. They carry

disease and are proliferating to a very dangerous level. Keeping empty wine and spirits bottles in liquor stores would serve as a magnet for rats and other unwanted pests.

Third, storing empty bottles will cause significant damage to our stores. Our stores come in all styles, however, most were expensive to decorate and have hardwood floors or expensive carpeting. Some have cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to build out. Keeping bags of empty bottles or a returnable machine in these small establishments will create a terrible odor, ruin their floors, and attract bugs and rodents. This would dramatically diminish their consumer appeal and could very easily destroy their investment.

Fourth, it has been noted in the past that our returned empty bottles could be picked up on a “regular” basis. That would have to mean daily to be even remotely workable. It is unrealistic at best to believe that even the savviest entrepreneur could overcome the logistical constraints of picking up bags of empty bottles from 2,500 stores over 9 counties in some of the most densely populated areas in the world on a daily basis. What sounds like a great idea would leave our mom-and-pop owners waiting days for pickups. Indeed, even a day without a pickup would be unworkable for our stores for the aforementioned reasons.

In downstate New York, Metro’s mom-and-pop package stores are one of the few remaining gateways for immigrant families. Parents can come here, open a package store, and create a life for their children. Often, these first-generation immigrants sleep in their stores. These bills would diminish the value and condition of every one of those mom-and-pop establishments. While we fully understand the good intentions of this legislation, we must strongly oppose the inclusion of wine and spirits in any expansion of the Bottle Bill.