



Northeast Region

**Joint Public Hearing: To examine legislative solutions to increase the effectiveness of the Bottle Bill
October 23, 2023**

Senate and Assembly Standing Committees
on Environmental Conservation
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12242

Chairs Glick and Harckham and Committee Members,

I am writing today on behalf of the New York State chapter of the National Waste and Recycling Association. New York NWRA members operate in every community in the state and employ more than 23,700 residents and generates \$5.9 billion in state revenues. I'm writing today in opposition to expanding the state's "Bottle Bill" Law which would increase container deposits from five to 10 cents and expand the list of accepted containers.

Bottle bill expansions present an economic and disruptive burden to both recycling markets and local taxpayers. Requiring consumers to transport and deposit their recyclables at collection facilities and removes up to 50 percent of plastics and aluminum from recycling streams. This reduction in these valuable commodities increases curbside recycling costs for customers and municipalities. It may also threaten public and private recycling facilities, forcing them to cut jobs or shut down due to loss of revenue.

Any bottle bill expansion will only further duplication in the state's recycling process. Recycling technologies have advanced significantly since the bottle bill. Now there are two redundant recycling systems – a bottle bill system recovering a limited percentage of the recycling stream (<1%) and Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs) recovering all recyclables. Materials considered under the bottle bill expansion are already being recycled by MRFs. Solutions are needed for hard-to-recycle materials MRFs cannot process (i.e. carpets, tires, mattresses, and lithium-ion batteries).

New York residents will still pay for two recycling systems – a per container fee under the expanded bottle bill system and a residential curbside or drop off service for solid waste & recycling. They will also be directly impacted by additional costs – a \$0.10 upfront container deposit and as a hidden fee, relayed via higher costs of groceries, as producers pass along their handling costs.



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States instituted bottle bills as litter abatement programs before curbside recycling was initiated and now are used by just ten states as they are an inefficient method of managing post-use of the product. Furthermore, just because a container has been redeemed does not mean that it will be recycled and may still wind up in a landfill. New York would be better served by investing unclaimed deposit money in performance standards, existing infrastructure, and education, litter cleanup, enforcement, and recycling assistance for municipalities.

California's biggest bottle redemption center chain, rePlanet, shut down operations in California, closing all 284 of its locations. Even with the support of funds from deposits, it was ultimately financially unsustainable. Consumers were redeeming only about half of the deposits that they paid and were instead utilizing their curbside recycling bins, which from a sustainability perspective is the better choice. Furthermore, curbside recycling provides efficiencies not enjoyed by container deposit redemption centers.

It is also beneficial to compare container recycling rates for places that require deposits with those that do not. In New York City and Boston where there are state laws mandating container deposits, their container recycling rates are less than 20 percent and 25 percent respectively while Seattle and Austin have rates of 60 percent and 42 percent respectively despite their states not requiring deposits.

An expanded bottle bill will harm recycling due to the fact that the containers targeted for the expansion are currently being managed effectively in local recycling programs. They are key items in the recycling bin that have a positive commodity value. The value of those containers help underwrite the cost of delivering everyone's recycling services. Without these valuable recyclable containers in the general recyclables stream, the cost to municipalities, and ultimately New York resident taxpayers, to continue their recycling programs will assuredly go up.

NWRA released a [study](#) recently that evaluates the impact of bottle bills on materials recovery facility (MRF) costs and revenues and those impacts on municipalities. The study found that although deposits do lead to substantially greater recovery overall, they also lead to higher costs and lower revenues at the material recovery facilities (MRF) as high-value materials move to the deposit system and out of the MRF. The research estimates that municipalities will see an increase of approximately \$2.50 to \$5.00 per household per year in MRF costs, depending on the deposit scenario.



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Thank you for your consideration of our written testimony.

Sincerely,

Lewis A. Dubuque

Lewis A. Dubuque
Vice President, New York Chapter
National Waste & Recycling Association