



**Testimony of Rhonda Keyser, Chair of the Brooklyn Solid Waste Advisory Board
on behalf of the Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and Bronx Solid Waste Advisory Boards.
before the New York State Joint Committee on Environmental Conservation
In Support of the Bottle Bill Amendment
(S237B/Senator Harckham, A10184/Assemblymember Glick)
October 23, 2023**

Thank you, Chairs Harckham and Glick for holding this hearing today and for the invitation to provide testimony. I'm Rhonda Keyser, and I'm Chair of the Brooklyn Solid Waste Advisory Board (SWAB for short). Our members are appointed by the Brooklyn Borough President to advise on solid waste policy.

My testimony today is based on the all-SWAB Comments Document for the New York State Draft Solid Waste Management Plan which was co-signed by 44 organizations across the State in March 2023 and led by Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens, and Bronx SWABs, representing four fifths of the population of the City of New York.

The New York State Climate Action Council (CAC) in its Nation-leading Climate plan and resulting law set the goals of a 40-percent reduction in statewide greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 levels by 2030 and an 85-percent reduction from 1990 levels by 2050." USEPA analyzed carbon emissions from a systems based framework and determined that "almost 50% of GHG can be mitigated by zero waste programs, legislation and incentives." While these laws and goals are important, we know that policy and words are hollow without infrastructure. New York State's Returnable Container Act, commonly referred to as the "Bottle Bill," has proven to be an incredibly effective piece of waste reduction infrastructure since its enactment in 1982.

Now, after 41 years, we believe it is time to update this legislation, and we strongly support the proposed amendment known as the "Bigger Better Bottle Bill" ([S237B/A10184](#)). This amendment represents a major leap forward in advancing the capture and recycling of glass, metal, and plastic containers in quantities substantial enough to significantly reduce waste sent to landfills and incinerators throughout the state of New York. Modernizing this legislation would yield remarkable results according to Reloop North America¹, such as:

- an impressive 85 percent reduction in litter from discarded beverage containers,
- an estimated annual recycling of 5.4 billion beverage containers, resulting in 258,000 more tons of high-value materials being recycled each year than would otherwise have been recycled (167,000 tons in New York City alone),
- an additional \$852 million added to the state's economy annually,
- a reduction in carbon emissions by an estimated 331,900 metric tons of CO₂ each year,
- additionally, by redirecting recyclables away from costly curbside collection systems, this legislation has saved New York cities and towns significant resources.

¹ [Reloop | Reimagining the Bottle Bill](#)

New York City currently sends a significant amount of our waste to these Upstate landfills and incinerators. One clear example of just one landfill is Seneca Meadows. The updated Bottle Bill would reduce adverse impacts on our Upstate neighbors, by reducing 20,000 of the 500,000 tons of waste that New York City exports yearly to Seneca Meadows, soon to be one of the tallest manmade structures in Upstate New York according to *The New York Times*².

The current bottle deposit system in New York State is an effective and proven waste diversion and resource capture incentive. Non-carbonated beverage containers, wine, liquor, sports drinks and others proposed in the Bigger Better Bottle Bill, too often end up as litter. Including these additional beverage containers into the current bottle deposit system by assigning a value to them and making that value accessible to everyone in New York State builds upon our most effective materials recovery system to clean up our streets and waste streams.

The increase in the bottle deposit from 5 to 10 cents provides a strong incentive to return these containers for the people who buy them, and for the "Green Army" who clean our streets and waste streams to redeem containers for deposits and are "some of the most effective, affordable, and necessary waste managers and recyclers on earth, protecting both land and sea."³ They provide the infrastructure for low-tech, human-scale solutions that answer our low-income entrepreneurs' need to make an honest living in addition to helping achieve the City's Zero Waste goals at no cost to taxpayers.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this important discussion. We know that the infrastructure works for these laws and goals are important, we know that policy and words are no good without infrastructure. We, the SWABs, would like to honor the memory of Ryan Thoresen Carson of NYPIRG, who worked tirelessly with all parties to advance the Bigger Better Bottle Bill.

² [Why a Landfill as Tall as the Statue of Liberty May Rise Even Higher - The New York Times](#)

³ [A Green Army Is Ready to Keep Plastic Waste Out of the Ocean - Scientific American Blog Network](#)