

## **Written Testimony of Kurt Krumperman of Zero Waste Capital District on the Modernized Better Bottle Bill to Joint Senate and Assembly Environmental Conservation Committees Hearing held October 23, 2023**

I represent Zero Waste Capital District which is a 501C3 organization that is coalition of organizations and individual volunteers in New York's Capital District that focuses on outreach, education, and policy advocacy to build the future of sustainable waste management. I urge Governor Hochul to work with the legislature to include the Modernized Bottle Bill in her executive budget.

During this 41<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the initial implementation of New York's Bottle Deposit Law, the 'Bottle Bill' needs modernization by increasing the 5-cent refundable deposit to 10-cents on an expanded set of eligible beverage containers to improve the collection and recycling rates of these items.

New York's Bottle Bill has been the state's most effective recycling and litter prevention program. For example, in 2020, New York's redemption rate was at 64%. The Bottle Bill reduces roadside container litter by 70%, and in 2020, 5.5 billion containers were recycled in the state. But the Governor knows we can do better, and we have to and she should support this improvement. We are drowning in plastic pollution and our landfills have reached or are reaching capacity. By including legislation that expands and modernizes the Bottle Bill, New York will lead the way on reducing waste, litter, and greenhouse gas emissions.

Not only would the expansion of the state's Bottle Bill increase recycling rates and make New York's environment and communities cleaner, it would also help municipal recycling programs that are currently facing a recycling crisis. Municipal recycling programs are especially struggling with glass containers in their recycling streams. When glass breaks in single stream curbside containers it can render much of the other materials unrecyclable for the municipality, or "contaminated". The expansion of the Bottle Bill to include wine, spirits, and hard cider would take a significant amount of the containers that municipalities are struggling with off their hands. ReLoop estimates that New York municipalities will save up to \$70.9 million dollars through waste diversion with the expansion of the bottle bill.

It is essential that New York addresses its waste issues with a fully modernized Bottle Bill in the state budget—one that increases the deposit and includes additional containers. The Modernized Bottle Bill needs to include the following provisions.

- Expand the program to include wine, spirits, hard cider, and most non-carbonated beverages. A deposit system that includes these additional containers dramatically reduces litter and solid waste that would otherwise be discarded. Many other states have already added these containers to their laws. For example, Maine's law covers all beverages except dairy products and unprocessed cider.
- Increase the deposit from 5-cents to 10-cents and use revenues to support recycling equity. States with higher deposit fees have higher redemption rates than states with a five-cent fee. In Michigan the deposit fee is 10-cents, and the redemption rate was 89%

in 2019. Vermont has a 15-cent deposit on liquor bottles and the redemption rate for liquor containers was 83% in 2020. Increasing the deposit could also generate more revenues for the state, which can be used to address limits on redemption options in low-income communities and other litter and solid waste problems in such communities. The impact of the nickel deposit that was approved in 1982 has eroded over time. A mere inflation update would likely make that deposit nearly 15-cents. It's past time for New York to raise its deposit to a dime.

- An increase in the handling fees for redemption centers. Hundreds of redemption centers have gone out of business in the past few years. Costs have increased for them but there has been no increase in the handling fees since 2009 used to operate the redemption centers. This is an essential part of the infrastructure of the recycling system in New York.
- We need to move away from single use products so the Modernized Bottle Bill should include a goal of 25% refillable containers by 2030. This will help reduce the amount of single use plastic that is overwhelming our solid waste systems and landfills and in the end is less expensive.

Here are some outcomes expected by modernizing the Bottle Bill:

- Increase recycling rate of beverage containers from 69% to 92%
- 5.4 billion additional beverage containers recycled
- Reduction of 331,900 metric tons of CO2 released to the atmosphere
- Green House Gas equivalent of taking 72,000 cars off the road
- Up to 34% reduction in litter
- Addition of 1,526 jobs
- An additional \$171 to \$349 million to the state for reinvestment in the collection and recycling infrastructure

The policy behind the bottle redemption program was settled in 1982. Modernization is needed to catch up with financial realities and changes in the product marketplace. We must act and improve this program. This is an executive budget issue given the additional state revenue that would result that could then be applied to the states recycling infrastructure and environmental programs.

Finally, I request consideration of naming the Modernized Bottle Bill the Ryan Carson Bigger Better Bottle Bill. Ryan has led the effort across the state to get this legislation passed. He was tragically killed earlier this month in a random act of violence, and it would be a wonderful tribute to Ryan and his work to give this legislation his name.

Thank you.

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