

Testimony of Kurt Krumperman on Better Bottle Bill to Joint Legislative Budget Hearing
February 14, 2023

I represent Zero Waste Capital District which is a coalition of organizations and individual volunteers that focuses on outreach, education, and policy advocacy to build the future of sustainable waste management. Governor Hochul's decision to leave the proposed Bigger Better Bottle Bill out of her executive budget is a tremendous mistake.

During this 40th 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 (it is an Extended Producer Responsibility program that actually works). 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 she should support this improvement.

Inexplicably, the Governor has failed to include a key expansion of the Bottle Redemption Program in her proposed Executive Budget—the state's highly successful Returnable Container law of 1982. It is essential that Governor Hochul include an expansion of the EPR-based "Bigger, Better, Bottle Bill" in the state budget. 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.

Additionally, municipal recycling programs make most of their revenue from handling waste, not from recycled material. It is estimated that New York municipalities will save up to \$70.9 million dollars 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 Bigger, Better 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.

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
- Green House Gas equivalent of taking 72,000 cars off the road
- Up to 34% reduction in litter
- Addition of 1,526 jobs
- \$171 to \$349 million to the state for reinvestment in the collection and recycling infrastructure

Key to the success of the bottle redemption program are the redemption centers and the canners that support themselves by collecting beverage containers off the streets. They have not had a raise since 1982. The expansion of the bottle bill will support these businesses and these workers.

A recent Sienna College/NYPIRG opinion indicates significant support for the modernization of the Bottle Bill. The New York Legislature should show that support as well.

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