



Written testimony submitted by Laurie Konwinski on Better Bottle Bill
to Joint Legislative Budget Hearing, February 7, 2024

I am submitting this testimony to explain why a faith-based social service agency is working to pass the Better Bottle Bill. In the counties of Tompkins and Tioga, my agency serves thousands of low-income and vulnerable people each year. While most of our programs deliver direct services to clients in need, our mission also includes the mandate to “advocate for social justice and human dignity.” We are actively supporting the Bottle Bill because it advances this mission.

1. It would provide marginalized people with more income. Increasing the deposit on returnable containers to 10 cents and expanding the kinds of containers that require a deposit will be a well-deserved increase in wages for the marginalized New Yorkers who redeem containers as part of their livelihood. These “canners” are often immigrants or people with disabilities who are performing a valuable service for their communities, reducing litter in neighborhoods, keeping recyclables out of landfills. They deserve a raise!
2. It would make neighborhoods, especially in poorer areas, more liveable by reducing litter.
3. It would assist in addressing climate change. Trash buried in landfills produces greenhouse gas emissions. The less material we bury and the more we re-use, the more likely it is we can reach our climate goals. Catholic Charities cares about climate justice not as an abstract issue, but because it is now and will continue to directly harm marginalized people worst and first—those in lowlying areas, those without property insurance, those already living subsistence lives. It is one of the great moral issues of our time. The Bottle Bill is a straightforward step in the right direction.
4. It would remind people of their personal responsibility to the environment and thus to each other. Increasing the deposit and expanding the kinds of containers within the Bottle Bill will incentivise New Yorkers to keep the containers they’ve purchased out of the landfill. Adults and even children can make it a habit to redeem containers. This habit can help foster a whole mindset of sustainable practices. It will help people to recognizing that everything we throw in the trash has global ramifications and that we have a duty to be accountable for it.

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