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Rhode Island General Assembly
House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Public Hearing on HB 5343
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Written Testimony

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Chair Bennett and members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony in opposition to House Bill 5343, which would prohibit the use of state funds to purchase single-serve plastic bottled water products.

The International Bottled Water Association (IBWA) strongly opposes HB 5343. This legislation is not in the public interest, and IBWA would urge the Committee not to support it. IBWA opposes this legislation for the following reasons:

- Polyethylene terephthalate (PET) plastic bottled water containers have the lowest environmental footprint of any packaged beverage containers, including those made with glass, aluminum, or paperboard cartons.
- PET plastic bottled water containers use less water to produce than any other packaged beverage.
- Restricting access to bottled water, in any packaging, would hinder individuals searching for a healthier beverage alternative.

PET Plastic Is the Most Environmentally Friendly Packaging

Attempts to eliminate the availability of plastic bottles of water would remove the most environmentally friendly beverage packaging option. PET plastic bottled water containers have the smallest environmental impact compared to all other drink packaging types.[1, 2, 3]

[1]Life Cycle Assessment of Common Drink Packaging – Prepared for the International Bottled Water Association by Trayak, LLC. 2021. Executive Summary available at: https://bottledwater.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Trayak-LCA_2021.pdf
[2] Climate impact of plastics. McKinsey & Company. July 2022. Available at: https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/chemicals/our-insights/climate-impact-of-plastics
[3] Life Cycle Impacts of Plastic Packaging Compared to Substitutes in the United States and Canada. Prepared for the American Chemistry Council and Canadian Plastics Industry Association by Franklin Associates. April 2018. Available at: https://www.americanchemistry.com/better-policy-regulation/plastics/resources/life-cycle-impacts-of-plastic-packaging-compared-to-substitutes-in-the-united-states-and-canada

Trayak LLC, a sustainability consulting firm, conducted a Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) for IBWA, which measured several variables to determine the overall environmental impact of specific packaging types, including PET water bottles, glass bottles, canned water, and beverage cartons. The assessment shows that PET water bottles have a lower environmental impact than all other containers across each of the considered variables.

Environmental Impact of Drink Packaging

(Weights are for individual 16.9 oz containers. Other values represent 1 million 16.9 oz bottles, cartons, or cans each.)

Resources Used to Make Packaging	PET Water Bottle	Aluminum Can	Beverage Carton	Glass Bottle
Avg. Container Weight	8.3 grams	19.7 grams	21.8 grams	300.6 grams
Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions	50 Ton CO_2 eq.	155 Ton CO_2 eq.	75 Ton CO_2 eq.	383 Ton CO_2 eq.
Fossil Fuel Use	958 GJ Consumed	1342 GJ Consumed	1056 GJ Consumed	4320 GJ Consumed
Water Use	4.6 million gallons	7.5 million gallons	13.7 million gallons	29.9 million gallons

In addition, McKinsey & Company, a well-respected consulting firm, issued a report that supports the Trayak assessment's findings. That report shows that "PET bottles have the lowest GHG emissions because of their lightweight properties and the low amount of energy required to produce them. By contrast, aluminum cans have two times the emissions of PET bottles, and emissions from glass bottles are three times higher." It is important to note that this report compares PET soda bottles, rather than PET water bottles, with other packaging types. If McKinsey & Company had included PET water bottles in this report, it is highly likely that the report would have found an even greater disparity between GHG emissions when compared with aluminum cans and glass bottles.

As shown in the Trayak assessment and supported by findings in the McKinsey & Company report, GHG emissions are less for PET plastic packaged bottled water than other packaged beverages. As a comparison, if the industry were to switch from bottling water in 16.9-ounce PET plastic containers to the equivalent size aluminum cans, beverage cartons, or glass bottles, the increased GHG emissions would equate to:

- more than 1.9 million more cars on the road annually for aluminum cans;
- over 422,000 more cars on the road annually for cartons; or
- nearly 6 million more cars for glass bottles.

Producing bottled water in PET plastic also consumes less energy. The amount of energy saved by producing bottled water in PET plastic bottles compared to other packaging is equivalent to:

- Powering over 844,000 more homes each year for aluminum cans;
- Powering over 253,000 more homes each year for cartons; or
- Powering 7.6 million more homes each year for glass bottles.

The National Association of PET Container Resources (NAPCOR) published an LCA in 2023 that confirms the total lifecycle impacts of the PET container is significantly less than the

impacts of glass and aluminum.[4] To emphasize its LCA results, NAPCOR provided a case study citing San Francisco International Airport's (SFO) ban on plastic water bottles, which began in August 2019. NAPCOR determines replacing the daily sale of 9,000 plastic water bottles since the ban began with aluminum cans would produce an estimated 1,100 metric tons of cumulative extra CO_2 emissions, compared to the GHG impacts from plastic water bottles.

The industry recognizes that there is room for improvement and is always looking for ways to strengthen existing recycling programs, expand recycling efforts, and reduce the use of virgin plastic. But the data are clear that PET packaging is best for single serve bottled water. Preventing the purchase of bottled water in plastic packaging and instead purchasing water in packaging alternatives like aluminum, glass, or cartons would increase GHG emissions and result in an increased use of resources.

Bottled Water in Plastic Containers Uses Less Water than Other Packaging Types

In addition, the Trayak report shows that it takes much less water to produce PET bottled water containers than all other packaging types. Choosing water packaged in PET plastic produced specifically for bottled water instead of the other packaging types saves:

- almost 245 billion gallons of water each year if packaged in aluminum containers, or the equivalent of over 38 million people showering every day for an entire year;
- over 768 billion gallons of water annually if packaged in cartons, or the equivalent of over 122 million people showering every day for a year;
- over 2 trillion gallons of water annually if packaged in glass bottles, or the equivalent of over 326 million people showering every day for a year; and

Using packaging other than PET plastic for bottled water will result in the increased use of water. To support sustainable sourcing, the bottled water industry uses plastic packaging to ensure that the least amount of water is used to produce our industry's products.

Bottled Water's Role in Healthy Hydration

For those who want to eliminate or moderate calories, sugar, caffeine, artificial flavors or colors, and other ingredients from their diet or simply wish to opt for a convenient beverage with refreshing taste, reliable quality, and zero calories choosing water is the right choice – no matter what the delivery method. Bottled water is a smart decision and a healthy choice when it comes to beverage options. Efforts to eliminate or reduce access to bottled water such as this legislation only hinder attempts to encourage people to choose healthier drink options.

In fact, since 1998, approximately 73% of the growth in bottled water consumption has come from people switching from carbonated soft drinks, juices, and milk to bottled water. One of the simplest changes a person can make is to switch to drinking water instead of other beverages that are heavy with sugar and calories. According to the Institute of Medicine and the American Journal of Preventative Medicine, two-thirds of American adults are overweight with one-third of those individuals being obese, and over the last 30 years, children's obesity rates have climbed

[4] Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) Report – NAPCOR. Available at PET Life Cycle Assessment Report 2023 - NAPCOR

from 5% to 17%. Drinking zero-calorie beverages, such as water, instead of sugary drinks is regularly cited as a key component of a more healthful lifestyle, and promoting greater consumption of water from all sources, including from bottled water, can only benefit those efforts.

In today's on-the-go society, most of what we drink comes in a package. Attacks on bottled water only help to promote less healthy options among other packaged beverages, like juices and soda, which have *more packaging, more ingredients,* and *greater environmental impacts* than bottled water. Research shows that if bottled water isn't available, 52% of people will choose soda or another sugared drink – not tap water. And, Of the bottled water drinkers who have a packaging preference, almost 8 out of 10 (78 percent) prefer bottled water packaged in plastic bottles (14 percent said glass, 4 percent said metal cans, and 4 percent said paper cartons or box).

Conclusion

IBWA urges the Committee to consider these important facts and vote against HB 5343. IBWA hopes that this information has provided you with better insight into the bottled water industry and the importance of bottled water for the people of Rhode Island. We appreciate this opportunity to offer these comments and are available at any time to discuss information on the industry and the essential products we provide.