



## Audubon Society of Rhode Island

May 13, 2025

Chair David Bennett

House Environment and Natural Resources

Rhode Island State House

Providence, RI 02903

### **Re: Audubon Society of Rhode Island Strongly Opposes H6205 – Extended Producer Responsibility**

Dear Chair Bennett and Members of the Committee,

Audubon Society of Rhode Island and our 17,000 members and supporters urge you to oppose H6205, a bill that neglects proven measures of protecting the environment. Extended Producer Responsibility has not yet been fully implemented in the United States and to prioritize it over a bill that includes a sensible approach to EPR and proven measures to protect the environment from plastic waste flies in the face of the purpose of attempts to reduce plastic recycling rates.

EPR increases recycling rates from when plastics and other materials are put into recycling bins, but does not incentivize communities to recycle bottle and cans that instead litter the environment. This harm to biodiversity such as seabirds, whales, fish, turtles, seals, and more is pervasive and wrong. Not only can this plastic litter kill an animal, even as large as a whale, but can impact their quality of life and damage the entire ecosystem. Upon autopsies and carcasses, large amount of plastic, including sometimes whole bottles, is found within these animals. The issue is widespread and unconscionable given the proven efficacy of bottle deposit systems that have been discussed in Rhode Island for decades. To protect the environment, any bill that includes EPR must include an effective measure that keeps litter off Rhode Island land and out of our water and this bill does not do that on its own.

Audubon Society of Rhode Island was a member of the study commission examining bottle deposits systems and extended producer responsibility. We spent the time to hear testimony, ask questions, and develop the best approach given the evidence and facts from other successfully implemented bottle deposit systems. Out of that commission came a coalition, not just amongst environmental groups, but of packaging manufacturers. We are thrilled to work alongside these partners to promote proven measures to protect the environment and find additional ways to increase recycling rates. Such a wide-ranging coalition with evidence-based solutions should not be ignored for less than a half measure.

We urge the committee to oppose this bill since there is a better option and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Phoenix Wheeler (they/them)

Director of Advocacy

*Connecting All People With Nature*

State Headquarters: 12 Sanderson Road, Smithfield, RI 02917 • 401-949-5454 • [www.asri.org](http://www.asri.org)

Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium: 1401 Hope Street, Bristol, RI 02809



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**Legislation must include a bottle deposit system to prevent environmental pollution. EPR neglects this responsibility as it does not incentivize recycling over littering the environment.**



NOAA Marine Debris Program.

“Bite Size Plastic: How Marine Wildlife Snack on Our Trash | OR&R’s Marine Debris Program



Photo credit: Vince Clinches



Photo cred: Dan Clark/USFWS/AP



Photo credit: Tomlinson

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