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May 13, 2025

The Honorable David Bennett  
House Committee on Environment & Natural Resources  
State House  
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chairman Bennett and Committee Members:

The Northern RI Chamber of Commerce (NRICC) represents businesses in the communities of Burrillville, Central Falls, Cumberland, Foster, Glocester, Johnston, Lincoln, North Providence, North Smithfield, Pawtucket, Scituate, Smithfield and Woonsocket. The Chamber writes to express its concerns related to the bottle redemption proposal outlined in both H.6206 and H.6207, Acts Relating to Health and Safety.

These bills would impose a ten-cent fee on nearly every beverage sold in the state. That means an increase in the cost of water, soda, beer, wine, and more paid for by Rhode Island's local businesses and consumers. The businesses in the Northern RI Chamber face strong competition from the bordering state of Massachusetts. Many people live and work closer to a Massachusetts retailer than a Rhode Island retailer. Massachusetts charges a five-cent per bottle tax on a more narrow field of product than proposed in H.6202 and H.6207. We are concerned that the advantage our retailers now experience will go away with the implementation of a new tax on beverage containers. Our businesses cannot afford to lose sales in these challenging and uncertain economic times to our neighboring state. An increase in costs will be felt by businesses twice - first when they are forced to cover the higher cost to stock their shelves and then again when higher prices drive down sales at the register.

Additionally, we are concerned about the potential for fraud as consumers purchase products in Massachusetts and attempt to redeem them in Rhode Island due to the higher deposit attached. We have seen this happen as Rhode Island consumers try to redeem Rhode Island purchased containers in our neighboring state.

At the Chamber, we believe that a healthy Rhode Island is one where families and businesses can thrive. Keeping our state clean and increasing recycling rates is part of that vision but it needs to be done in a way without penalizing those businesses that operate along the border.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns related to H.6206 and H.6207.

Respectfully,

Elizabeth Catucci  
President/CEO  
Northern Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce