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 supports H6206 - Beverage Containers

Dear Chair Bennett and members of the committee,

Audubon Society of Rhode Island and our 17,000 members and supporters urge you to support H6206, a bill that contains proven measures of protecting the environment.

Beverage deposit systems <u>incentivize communities to recycle bottles and cans that would have instead littered the environment.</u> 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 damage the entire ecosystem. Upon autopsies and carcasses, a large amount of plastic, including 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 aims to increase recycling rates must include an effective measure that keeps litter off Rhode Island land and out of our water, and this bill does include those proven measures.

The Audubon Society of Rhode Island was a member of the study commission examining bottle deposit 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. These conversations have occurred over several decades in Rhode Island and the commission was able to thoroughly examine best practices because of the successful, full implementation in other states.

We urge the committee to require a beverage deposit system as a key piece of any legislation related to bottle or packaging recycling rates.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Phoenix Wheeler (they/them)
Director of Advocacy

Audubon Society of Rhode Island