

May 13, 2025

Representative David A. Bennett
Chair, House Environment and Natural Resources Committee
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02908

Re: The Nature Conservancy Supports H6207 on the Extended Produce Responsibility for Packaging and Bottle Deposit Return System

The Nature Conservancy supports House Bill 6207, which would create an Extended Producer Responsibility program and create a beverage container deposit recycling system in Rhode Island. We thank Representative McEntee for sponsoring it, and Knight, Bennett, Boylan, Carson, McGaw, Cortvriend, Donovan, Handy, and Kazarian for co-sponsoring.

The Nature Conservancy is a global organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Here in Rhode Island, The Nature Conservancy protects more than 14,000 acres of land and has partnered on the permanent conservation of more than 35,000 acres.

Plastics are a growing pollution issue across the state. At The Nature Conservancy, we are seeing this pollution first-hand. For example, TNC was a partner with CRMC and DEM on the 2019-2020 dredging of the Providence River, and again in 2022- early 2023. The dredging was regularly interrupted by equipment becoming ensnared in trash (particularly plastics) – which not only polluted our waterways but added significant time and expense to the dredging project.

In addition, the University of Rhode Island recently did a study of microplastics present in Narragansett Bay. The study found around 1,000 tons of microplastics in the top 2 inches of bottom sediment in the Bay, with higher levels in the upper Bay near the urban centers. TNC marine scientists study the fish populations in the upper Bay and the important role it plays for the marine life of the larger Bay. Microplastics are both a global and local issue, impacting human health, marine ecosystems, and quality of life in Rhode Island.

To address the large-scale, harmful problem of macro and microplastics, this bill is a reasonable solution to reduce the quantity of plastics in our environment. Based on the work of the Study Commission, this bill serves as a combination of the recommendations in the final report of that Commission.

Plastic pollution is a problem with real solutions. House Bill 6207 is a sensible and foundational policy that will begin to address this issue. We respectfully request that this bill moves forward.

Sincerely,



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