

1300 19<sup>th</sup> ST  
8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Washington, D.C. 20036



Phone: 800-519-1541  
[www.oceanconservancy.org](http://www.oceanconservancy.org)

May 13, 2025

The Honorable David A. Bennett  
Chair, House Environment and Natural Resources Committee  
Rhode Island State House  
Providence, RI 02903

**RE: Support House Bill 6207 – Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging and Paper Act**

Dear Chair Bennett and Members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

Ocean Conservancy is working to protect the ocean from today's greatest global challenges. Together with our partners, we create evidence-based solutions for a healthy ocean and the wildlife and communities that depend on it. For 40 years, we have been on the forefront of tackling one of the ocean's biggest threats, plastic pollution, through organizing the largest cleanup effort in the world and successfully advocating for state, national and international policies to prevent plastics from becoming pollution in the first place.

We are writing to express our strong support of House Bill 6207 (H6207), which would establish a comprehensive Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) program in Rhode Island to combine EPR for packaging and paper products, deposit return systems (DRS) for beverage containers and source reduction to together drive the best environmental outcomes for our ocean and communities.

Every year, 11 million metric tons of plastics enter our ocean from land-based sources alone, much of which are single-use plastics, designed to be used once and then immediately discarded.<sup>1</sup> While the ocean is the epicenter of the plastic pollution crisis, the impacts of plastic production, use, and pollution are extensive. Plastics have been found in the deepest part of the ocean, on the tallest peaks in our national parks, and in our own bodies.

Rhode Island has seen the impact of this pollution firsthand. In the 40 years Ocean Conservancy has led the International Coastal Cleanup® (ICC), nearly 60,000 volunteers have removed almost 600,000 pounds of debris from Rhode Island beaches, waterways, and environments.<sup>2</sup> According to data from these cleanups, two of the top five most commonly collected items were associated with beverage container pollution and all five of the top collected items were single-use plastics. These numbers tell a clear story: we are drowning in single-use packaging and single-use plastics.

At Ocean Conservancy, we recently outlined an approach to achieve the best environmental outcomes practices for tackling plastic pollution through policies that hold producers accountable.<sup>3</sup> We found the

---

<sup>1</sup> Lau, W.W.Y., et al. (2020). [Science](#).

<sup>2</sup> Ocean Conservancy. "Trash Information and Data for Education and Solutions (TIDES) dataset." Retrieved from: <https://www.coastalcleanupdata.org/>. May 2025. (Data as of 2023 ICC).

<sup>3</sup> "Tackling Plastic Pollution Through Producer Accountability." (2024). Ocean Conservancy.

best environmental outcomes are achieved by selecting the best policy options for different types of containers that collectively hold producers financially accountable for their products. This means combining EPR for packaging and paper products with strong performance standards including reuse and reduction with a bottle bill (or DRS) program for beverage containers. Coupling a bottle bill with EPR creates a scalable, producer-funded system that paves the way for improved recycling and reuse infrastructure.

Bottle bill programs are a proven, essential tool across the country to achieve significant near-term reductions in pollution while also dramatically increasing recycling rates. In states with bottle bills, average recycling rates are more than double those in states without them.<sup>4</sup> Most importantly for our ocean and our environment, states that passed bottle bills saw beverage container litter decrease between 69% and 84% and overall litter decrease between 34% and 64%.<sup>5</sup>

Rhode Island's own bottle bill study commission, the Special Joint Legislative Commission to Study and Provide Recommendations to Protect our Environment and Natural Resources from Plastic Bottle Waste, reviewed recycling systems across the country and recommended the combined, comprehensive approach outlined in H6207.<sup>6</sup> These are evidence-based, budget-neutral policies that will shift financial responsibility away from taxpayers and toward the producers who design and profit from these materials. We urge you to support H6207 to establish a modern, efficient, and producer-funded recycling and reuse system that protects Rhode Island's communities and coastlines from plastic pollution.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anja Brandon', with a stylized, flowing script.

Anja Brandon, Ph.D.  
Director, Plastics Policy  
Ocean Conservancy

---

<sup>4</sup> [“The 50 States of Recycling.”](#) (2023). Eunomia.

<sup>5</sup> [“Litter studies in bottle bill states.”](#) Container Recycling Institute. Access May 2025.

<sup>6</sup> [“Special Joint Legislative Commission to Study and Provide Recommendations to Protect our Environment and Natural Resources from Plastic Bottle Waste - Final Report.”](#) Submitted to Rhode Island House of Representatives and Rhode Island Senate. April 8, 2024.