



House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

- Support **FOR HOUSE Bill 6207**, A Comprehensive Bottle Bill
- Hearing date: May 13, 2025

Chair David Bennet and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the League of Women Voters of Rhode Island, I am testifying in support of House Bill 6207, a comprehensive Bottle Bill, which reflects the tremendous work of the Joint Legislative Commission on Plastic Bottle Waste.

First off, thanks to the Cochairs of this Joint Commission, Senator Mark McKinney and Representative Carol Hagan McEntee, for their leadership on this important study. Thanks as well to all who joined them. The Commission spent the last 18 months gathering testimony from environmentalists, business owners and related industry spokespersons while also reviewing related solutions nationwide and in other countries. The Commission's Final Report (submitted to the RI Legislature, 4/8/25) is thoughtful, thorough, and well-researched. Its research clearly gives credence to the key emphases and details outlined in H 6207- which the League supports.

The Commission's research reveals that a Deposit & Return System (DRS) alone is insufficient in making an appreciable reduction in plastic bottle litter. A DPS must be combined with an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) program to achieve noticeable results. Therefore, along with a deposit and redemption requirement, H 6207 "would establish a comprehensive producer responsibility program for [single use] packaging and paper, and for the recycling of beverage containers". The League supports this dual requirement.

Not only would this bill address the overwhelming litter problem we find in our parking lots, local parks, and surrounding shores, recycling would reduce the production of plastic and the related microplastic invasion of these nanoparticles into seemingly every corner of our communities. These plastic bottles are not only a litter problem, but also a health concern for all of us.

As has been noted in the Commission's Report, URI research revealed that more than 1,000 tons of microplastics cover the floor of Narragansett Bay. These foreign particulates infiltrate the fish, birds, plant life and sea organisms who depend on this natural estuary for their survival. Humans, too, have become prime repositories of these tiny particles – through ingestion of food and water, contact with skin, and inhalation. Scientists are now concerned about possible links between cancer and other health problems, given the level of microplastic pollution found in the environment and presence in all species.

Also concerning is that some single use packaging and some plastic bottles have harmful chemicals added in their production. These toxins, in turn, can be passed on to users and further pollute landfills. By holding producers responsible for the safety of their products and requiring them to set up and pay for a viable Deposit and Redemption Program (DRP), the recycling costs to municipalities will be reduced substantially and the risks related to the health and safety of our communities can also be diminished.

It is time for Rhode Island to adopt an effective Bottle Bill program. H 6207, with its comprehensive 57 pages, has articulated an appropriate path forward for our state. Please support this bill.

Sincerely,

Diana (Donnie) McGee

Diana (Donnie) McGee, Advocacy Committee Cochair

League of Women Voters of RI, One Richmond Square, Providence, RI 02903