

To Honorable Representative Bennett and the members of the RI House Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

I am writing to SUPPORT H6207, AN ACT RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY (establishes a comprehensive program for extended producer responsibility for packaging and paper, and also recycling of beverage containers. This act would also provide general provisions for oversight of single-producer organizations.).

Beverage containers are a huge litter and marine debris problem. Two years ago, I was part of an effort to collect “nip” alcohol bottles statewide over a period of three months to raise awareness of this issue. These nip bottles in particular are a major problem as they are small enough to fit down storm drains, and also are too small to be recycled as they are incompatible with MRF at the Johnston Landfill. The nip collection project that year produced about 86,000 bottles (the included photo is of me in my kayak on top of the resulting pile of nips). Unfortunately, no bottle bill passed that year.

The following year, we modified our collection efforts to include all containers that would be covered by a bottle bill. I personally collected all beverage containers on a 1.2 mile stretch of Rt. 2 in Charlestown in February 2024 and found 512 items, including 270 nips (53%) and 108 non-alcoholic containers (21%). A month later on the same stretch of road I collected 103 new containers, including 65 nips (63%) and 17 non-alcoholic beverages (17%). Many older plastic items were on their way to becoming micro-plastics, having been repeatedly run over by vehicles or shredded by mowers. Unfortunately, once again no bottle bill passed that year.

The liquor industry has been in long-time opposition to a bottle bill, and has instead for more garbage cans to “solve” the problem. However, this will NOT help: beverage containers littering our roads and parking lots were mostly thrown out of vehicle windows by drivers—especially drivers who did not want to get caught with empty alcohol containers in their vehicles. Not one of the containers I collected on Rt. 2 in Charlestown would have ever ended up in a trash can, no matter how many more receptacles were deployed in the town.

The beverage producers, distributors, and retailers profit from the sale of the products that are the source of this problem, yet they refuse to take responsibility for it, offer any solutions to it, or even participate in the solutions that have been brought forth by others for years—solutions that have proven to be effective in other states for decades.

H 6207 requires a deposit, not a tax. There are people who:

- can financially absorb the deposit and can't be bothered returning the containers to get their deposit back—that's their choice. We are hoping that they will still recycle their empty containers.
- can't or are unwilling to absorb the deposit and will return their empties to get their deposit back as part of a future shopping trip.

- need extra money and will not only return their own containers, but will gather additional empties from friends, family, and the environment. The ~200 nips that fit in a five-gallon bucket are worth \$20.

Giving individuals and groups financial incentive to collect empties will get them off our roadsides and keep them out of our rivers and other waters, and will greatly improve our recycling rates. Having many convenient redemption options would really help the second and third groups of people listed above. Yet the business owners who profit from selling beverages—who are the sources of this problem!—refuse to willingly participate in a proven solution. It is long past time that they are required to take responsibility for the litter problems their businesses create.

We need a bottle bill NOW! Please, make 2025 the year we FINALLY get a long-awaited, long-overdue bottle bill here in Rhode Island!

Respectfully,
Elise Torello
2625D Commodore Perry Hwy.
South Kingstown



Me on
top of
~86,000
nip
bottles



Trash I collected from the Saugatucket River in Wakefield—mostly beverage containers, especially nip bottles.



Nip bottles floating in the Saugatucket River in Wakefield