



May 13, 2025

By Email

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

RE: Just Zero Supports House Bills 6206 and 6207

Dear Chair Bennett:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bills 6206 and 6207. **Just Zero supports both House Bill 6206 and House Bill 6207.**

Just Zero is a nonprofit organization working in Rhode Island and across the country with communities, policy makers, and others to implement just and equitable solutions to climate-damaging and toxic production, consumption, and waste disposal practices. We believe that all people deserve Zero Waste solutions with zero climate-damaging emissions and zero toxic exposures.

Both House Bill 6206 and House Bill 6207 would create a beverage container deposit return system — more commonly referred to as a “Bottle Bill” — in Rhode Island. Just Zero strongly supports Bottle Bill programs because they are, without question, the most effective litter prevention and recycling programs in the U.S. and across the world. The modern Bottle Bill program that would be created by either House Bill 6206 and House Bill 6207 would reduce litter, increase recycling and reuse, protect our natural environment from plastic pollution, and create jobs, all while fostering a beverage producer-run system that is convenient for both consumers and Rhode Island businesses. House Bill 6207 would also create an extended producer responsibility (or EPR) for packaging program that could help reduce other forms of packaging waste and improve recycling in Rhode Island.



I. Bottle Bill Programs are Popular and Increasingly Prevalent.

Dozens of jurisdictions around the world have implemented Bottle Bills, with new programs developing each year. The first Bottle Bill was established in 1970, in British Columbia, Canada.¹ Since then, over 50 additional jurisdictions have adopted programs, including ten U.S. states, almost all Canadian providences, and a large portion of the European Union.² Right now, over 290 million people live in communities with a Bottle Bill.³ This number is expected to grow as more programs come online. In the last three years, 15 U.S. states and the District of Columbia have considered proposals to implement new Bottle Bill programs.⁴

II. Bottle Bills Offer Significant Benefits.

Bottle Bill programs are popular and prevalent because they reduce litter, increase recycling, and create jobs. Moreover, as a form of producer responsibility, Bottle Bill programs provide these benefits while also helping save consumers and governments money.

A. Litter Reduction

Placing a refundable deposit on every single-use beverage container sold in Rhode Island will incentivize consumers to hold on to their empty containers and bring them back for recycling. Essentially, the refundable deposit creates an understanding that while you are buying the beverage, you're renting the container. This incentive is extremely important because most single-use beverages are consumed on-the-go and outside of the home. This is why you see plastic soda bottles, rather than plastic peanut butter jars, littering, parks, streets, and streams.

After Hawaii enacted a Bottle Bill program in 2005, the number of beverage containers collected during Hawaii's Coastal Cleanup fell from 23,471 in 2004, to 10,905 in 2007 – a 53% drop in just three years.⁵ These litter reductions have occurred in all ten states with Bottle Bills. A 2020 study by Keep America Beautiful found that states without Bottle Bills have double the amount of beverage container litter than their Bottle Bill counterparts.⁶ Less litter doesn't just

¹ Reloop, [Global Deposit Book – 2022: An Overview of Deposit Return Systems for Single-Use Beverage Containers](#). (Nov. 2022)

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ Since 2022, the District of Columbia, Florida, Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, Washington, and West Virginia have considered some form of deposit return legislation.

⁵ Haw. Dep't of Health, Report to the Twenty-Fifth Legislature 9 (2009).

⁶ Keep America Beautiful, [2020 National Litter Study](#). Page. 3. May 2021.



mean cleaner, more vibrant communities, it also means less spending on clean-up efforts. Estimates show that the United States spends more than \$11 billion on litter clean up every year.⁷

B. Increased Recycling Rates

Litter reduction is not the only benefit these programs provide. On average, states with Bottle Bills have double the recycling rates than those that rely solely on curbside recycling programs.⁸ In terms of plastic and glass bottles, Bottle Bill programs produce recycling rates that are often three times higher than single-stream recycling.⁹

The refundable deposit in Bottle Bills helps incentivize the return of empty containers, which in turn drives up the recycling rates. However, Bottle Bills don't simply increase the number of containers that are returned for recycling. They also create a higher quality of recycled material which significantly increases the likelihood that the containers will actually be recycled to manufacture a new product. Although the ten Bottle Bill states only represent 27% of the U.S. population, they account for over 50% of all beverage containers recycled annually.¹⁰ Moreover, Bottle Bill states also have higher overall recycling rates as their municipal and curbside recycling systems can better focus their efforts on capturing and recycling other common recyclables.¹¹

C. Job Creation

In addition to reducing litter and increasing recycling rates, Bottle Bills also create good, local jobs. In fact, reports show that Bottle Bills can create between 11 and 38 times more jobs than curbside recycling.¹² These jobs include technicians to service reverse vending machines, bag drop systems, and other forms of beverage container collection, storage, and sorting systems. As well as jobs associated with hauling beverage containers from redemption locations to centralized storage areas. There are also other indirect jobs associated with increased recycling

⁷ Andrew Lisa, [It Costs Over \\$11 Billion Per Year to Clean Up Litter – How the Pandemic's Effect on Trash Output May Make It Worse](#), Yahoo. (April 22, 2021).

⁸ Container Recycling Institute, [U.S. Nominal Recycling Rates by Deposit Status](#) (2019).

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ Marissa Heffernan, [Report: Bottle Bills States Recycle More, Provide Models](#), Resource Recycling. (Jan 2, 2024).

¹¹ Eunomia, [The 50 States of Recycling: a State-by-State Assessment of US Packaging Recycling Rates](#). (Dec. 2023).

¹² Reloop, [Factsheet: Deposit Return Systems Create More Jobs](#) (2022).



and manufacturing of recycled materials. A recent analysis of New York’s Bottle Bill found that the program supports 5,700 jobs statewide.¹³

D. Saving Consumers and Government Money

As a form of producer responsibility, Bottle Bill programs provide these benefits at no cost to consumers or government. At a time where recycling systems are struggling and plastic production and waste is increasing, the idea at the center of Bottle Bill programs remains that the companies that manufacture and distribute single-use beverage containers should ultimately be responsible for the end-of-life management of them. If a Bottle Bill program is created in Rhode Island, cities, towns, and residents will no longer be stuck paying to collect, sort, and recycle these containers. Instead, the large companies that manufacture them will be responsible.

III. House Bills 6206 and 6207 Include Several Key Elements of Successful Bottle Bills.

House Bill 6206 and House Bill 6207 incorporate several features that would help Rhode Island create and implement a highly successful Bottle Bill program, including wide coverage of most beverage container types, a strong 10-cent deposit, and container redemption rate targets.

A. Beverage Container Definition

Both bills include a broad definition of “beverage container” that would include in the deposit return program all containers between 40 milliliters and one gallon that contain any type of beverage, with limited exceptions. Simply put, the more types of containers – including bottled water, soda, juices, sports drinks, energy drinks, coffees, teas, beer, wine, liquor, and small alcohol “nips” – that the program covers, the more the program can do to reduce litter and improve recycling.

B. Strong Refundable Deposit

Under both bills, each beverage container sold in Rhode Island would have a refund value of 10 cents. A 10-cent deposit is a key feature of high-performing bottle bill programs. The two U.S. states with 10-cent deposits on beverage containers – Michigan and Oregon – have the highest redemption rates in the country, at or above 80 percent.¹⁴ Connecticut, after years of declining

¹³ Sarah Edwards, Eunomia Research and Consulting, Inc., [Employment and Economic Impact of Container Deposits](#), table E1 (Jan. 2019).

¹⁴ See Genevieve Grippo, An Effort to Dramatically Expand Michigan’s Bottle Deposit Law is



redemption rates, recently increased its deposit value to 10 cents.¹⁵ The evidence is clear: the higher the deposit value, the more effective the program.

C. Redemption Rate Targets

Both bills set minimum redemption rates that the Producer Responsibility Organization (“PRO”) administering the program is required to achieve. The minimum redemption rate starts at 65% before rising to 85%. This is realistic and achievable. High-performing Bottle Bill programs can and have attained redemption rates of 85% and above. A report from Eunomia on Bottle Bill programs in Europe found that the redemption rates vary between 84% and 96%, with a median rate of 91%.¹⁶

Oregon adopted a redemption target-based approach and it proved to be extremely successful. In 2011, the Oregon legislature adopted language that would require the deposit value to increase from five cents to ten cents if the redemption rate fell below 80% for two consecutive years.¹⁷ The redemption rate dropped to 64.5% in 2014, and only rose to 68.3% in 2015.¹⁸ As a result, the deposit value increased, and the redemption rate skyrocketed to 90% in 2018.¹⁹

IV. Conclusion

House Bill 6206 and House Bill 6207 would reduce litter, improve recycling, and create green jobs. It will also help Rhode Island address the growing plastic pollution crisis. In 2017, less than 6% of the 5.9 billion pounds of PET bottles sold in the U.S. were recycled.²⁰ The failure to meaningfully recycle plastic bottles contributes to the exponential growth in worldwide plastic

Back, Newschannel 3, Dec. 29, 2019, <https://wwmt.com/news/local/an-effort-to-dramatically-expand-michigans-bottle-deposit-law-is-back>; Cassandra Profita, Oregon Bottle Deposit System Hits 90 Percent Redemption Rate, NPR, Feb. 4, 2019, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2019/02/04/688656261/oregon-bottle-deposit-system-hits-90-percent-redemption-rate>.

¹⁵ See Susan Haigh, Connecticut Lawmakers Pass Major Expansion of Bottle Bill, NBC Connecticut, June 3, 2021, <https://www.nbcconnecticut.com/news/politics/connecticutlawmakers-debate-major-expansion-of-bottle-bill/2501536/>.

¹⁶ Eunomia, [PET Market in Europe State of Play: Production, Collection, and Recycling Data](#), pg. 14. (2020)

¹⁷ Talia Richman, Oregon Bottle Deposit Will Go From Nickle to Dime Next Year, Oregon Live. (Jan 9, 2017). Available at https://www.oregonlive.com/portland/2016/08/oregon_bottle_deposit_will_go.html

¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ NAPCOR, [Report on Postconsumer PET Container Recycling Activity](#), pg. 4 (2018).



production, which is projected to rise from 837 billion pounds produced in 2015 to almost 4 trillion in 2050.²¹

With either of these bills, Rhode Island can create a robust and effective Bottle Bill program that will protect the environment and the economy. For these reasons, Just Zero urges you to support these bills. Thank you for your time and your consideration of this testimony.

Sincerely,

Kevin Budris
Deputy Director
Just Zero

²¹ David Azouly, [Plastic & Health: The Hidden Costs of a Plastic Planet](#), pg. 6 (2019).