



RHODE ISLAND LIQUOR OPERATORS COLLABORATIVE

REPRESENTING RHODE ISLAND'S INDEPENDENT LIQUOR RETAILERS

H6205, H6206, H6207 - Oppose

13 May 2025

Dear Chairman Bennett and Committee Members:

The Rhode Island Liquor Operators Collaborative opposes House Bills 6205, 6206 and 6207.

The imposition of an Extended Producer Responsibility and/or Bottle Deposit System will equate to a tax on Rhode Island consumers. At a time where we should be focused on lowering costs for constituents, this bill will have the opposite impact, increased prices at the cash register. However, it is ineffective and unacceptable to be before you in opposition and not present solutions to a problem. But first, we must address what the actual problem is.

As a member of the Special Joint Legislative Commission to Study and Provide Recommendations to Protect Our Environment and Natural Resources from Plastic Bottle Waste, we covered many different areas within the recycling and waste realm. However, early on, the goal of the chairpeople became abundantly clear: In order to remove waste from our environment, the onus of reinventing our state's recycling system was to be put on the industry. Let it be clear, we are no fans of litter and of those who actively litter. Littering is perhaps one of the most shameful nonviolent things one can do and we all must do our part in making sure our recycling system works the way it should. However, after more than 20 hours of commission hearings, one thing was abundantly clear to me: We were missing the plot entirely.

Rhode Island's Materials Recycling Facility was last renovated in 2012, when Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation (RIRRC) moved to "single-stream" recycling, which processes paper, cardboard and containers together. Although cutting-edge at the time, single-stream recycling has led to an increase in rejected loads at RIRRC due to contamination because of co-mingling of materials.

As reported by WJAR-10, "Every week, truckloads of recycled waste are dumped into a landfill after getting rejected at Rhode Island Resource Recovery for having a contamination level of 10% or more. Roughly 29,000 tons of rejected recycling ended up in Rhode Island's landfill last year, enough to fill 895 football fields. That represents 4,900 more tons than 2023 and over 23,000 more tons than 2019, indicating the problem is getting worse instead of better."

In response, RIRRC plans to replace its current system and will release a request for qualifications for facility design and support services by early summer. A spokesperson for the corporation said, "RIRRC will be looking for a design that increases its ability to handle higher levels of inbound contamination whether those are driven by material type, size, compaction moisture concerns, etc."

Massive advances have been made in the field of solid waste recovery and there is a large amount of money to be made on the recyclable resale market. Rhode Island reinvesting in and modernizing its own curbside recycling system, which is the most convenient method when it comes to widespread participation, has the most financial upside to Rhode Island. Passing the pieces of legislation before you and placing the responsibility on private industry to do the job that the State should have been doing all along is misguided.

At a time where money is tight, enacting a program that seems, at face value, to come at zero cost to the State of Rhode Island, may seem enticing. However, carrying a belief that manufacturers will absorb these costs is naive; for-profit corporations will ensure they do not lose margin in this venture. Passing any combination of EPR or Bottle Deposits will create a regressive tax on consumers at a time where people simply cannot afford yet another cost increase.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nicholas A. Fede, Jr.".

Nicholas A. Fede, Jr.
Executive Director