



May 21, 2025

TO: Senator Susan Sosnowski, Chair, Senate Committee on Environment & Agriculture  
Representative David Bennett, Chair, House Committee on Environment & Natural Resources

RE: Senate Bill 996 & House Bill 6207

Now that the "bottle bill" (H6207 and S996) has been heard in both the House and Senate, and as your respective committees are considering testimony from supporters and opponents, we feel compelled to respond to and clarify some of the misinformation that is being spread by opponents of the bills.

1) Opponents are calling this a "tax" even though a DEPOSIT (unlike a tax) is fully and immediately refundable. You could literally step outside of a store, drink your beverage, put the empty container into a reverse vending machine and immediately get your deposit back. If you buy a keg of beer, the store charges you a DEPOSIT on the keg, which is refunded once you return the empty container. They don't call that a "tax" because it's fully refundable. They know the difference.

In their [op-ed this week in the Providence Journal](#), opponents of the bill referred to the deposit as a "tax" no fewer than six times, yet not once mentioned that the deposit is fully refundable. We believe they are intentionally misleading and confusing the public with their messaging.

2) H6207/S996 would have **no impact on the state budget**. All the costs of operating the system - *including any costs incurred by DEM for oversight* - would be borne by the producers. By contrast, the industry's preferred "EPR-only" bill (H6205/S939) proposes eliminating the existing beverage container tax, which *would* cost the state up to \$3.5 million per year. The [Department of Revenue has expressed concerns](#) about H6205/S939, but in correspondence dated May 19, 2025, Tax Administrator Neena Savage confirmed that she has no issues with the combo bill (H6207/S996) nor the "standalone" bottle bill (H6206/S997).

3) Despite claims from opponents, [RI voters support a bottle bill](#). A poll conducted by Save The

Bay and others in February found that [RI'ers support a bottle bill by a 58% to 31% margin](#) after hearing arguments from supporters and opponents. These poll results are consistent with [numerous other state and national polls](#), including a [poll funded by the beverage industry](#) that found 75%+ support nationally for bottle redemption programs. These programs are popular in the states and countries that have had them for decades.

We have heard, anecdotally, from several state legislators that they've received phone calls from elderly constituents (some literally in nursing homes) who were called by opponents and "patched through" to their legislators to voice opposition to the supposed "bottle tax." If opponents are intentionally targeting senior citizens with misinformation for political gain, they should be ashamed of themselves.

4) Despite opponents' concerns about how a bottle bill might impact RI Resource Recovery, **RIRRC testified last week that they are not opposed to H6207/S996**, and noted several ways that the legislation would benefit their operations. (Fast forward to [34:58](#) and [49:15](#) of last week's House hearing to see RIRRC's testimony.)

5) Opponents claim that it would be inconvenient and a burden for people to return their empty beverage containers for redemption. H6207/S996 contains specific language regarding **convenience standards**, including requiring convenient return options for those who rely on public transportation, the elderly and those with limited mobility. (See [p. 44 of the legislation](#).)

6) Opponents claim this will be a **burden on retailers and liquor stores**, despite the fact that this year's bill **explicitly does not require any retailer to take back empty containers** nor serve as a redemption location. (See [p. 46, lines 14-15](#) of the legislation.) This change was made in direct response to previous testimony from retailers.

7) Unlike systems in neighboring states and MA and CT, under H6207/S996 **distributors are not required to initiate or collect deposits, pay handling fees to redemption locations, nor take back or handle the empty containers.**

8) Opponents claim that a bottle bill would hurt beverage sales, despite evidence to the contrary. The Container Recycling Institute and the ReLoop Platform did a [comprehensive study of new and expanded bottle bill systems in the U.S. and abroad](#), and found **no evidence that bottle deposit programs negatively impact beverage sales.**

Despite claims by opponents that this legislation does not address their concerns, we believe that the bill sponsors have gone to great lengths to listen to and address many of the concerns and recommendations offered by opponents in recent years. The legislation is modeled after the successful Oregon bottle deposit program, in response to previous testimony from the American Beverage Association (ABA.) (The V.P. of Sustainability for the ABA, in [testimony to the joint study commission in December 2023](#), said "Oregon is a really great model. It works. The proof is in the pudding. I think that's a great model.") This legislation directly addresses concerns from

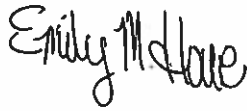
retailers and liquor stores by not requiring them to take back empty containers. And it directly addresses concerns from beverage distributors by not requiring them to collect deposits nor transport empty containers.

We hope this information is helpful. Our coalition of environmental advocates, consumer brands, material manufacturers, packaging suppliers, and trade associations remain committed to passing H6207 and S996 this year. Please feel free to reach out with any questions or concerns regarding this legislation.

Respectfully,



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Save The Bay



Emily Howe  
RI State Director  
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