



Audubon Society of Rhode Island

May 13, 2025

Chair David Bennet
House Environment and Natural Resources Committee
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Audubon Society of Rhode Island strongly supports H6207 - Beverage Containers and Extended Producer Responsibility

Dear Chair Bennett and members of the committee,

Audubon Society of Rhode Island and our 17,000 members and supporters urge you to prioritize and support H6207, a bill that contains proven measures of protecting the environment and is good policy based on sound research and best practices.

Beverage deposit systems incentivize communities to recycle bottles and cans that would have instead littered the environment. This harm to biodiversity such as seabirds, whales, fish, turtles, seals, and more is pervasive and wrong. Not only can this plastic litter kill an animal, even as large as a whale, but can damage the entire ecosystem. Upon autopsies and carcasses, a large amount of plastic, including whole bottles, is found within these animals. The issue is widespread and unconscionable given the proven efficacy of bottle deposit systems that have been discussed in Rhode Island for decades.

To protect the environment, any bill that aims to increase recycling rates must include an effective measure that keeps litter off Rhode Island land and out of our water, and this bill does include those proven measures.

The Audubon Society of Rhode Island was a member of the study commission examining bottle deposit systems and extended producer responsibility. We spent the time to hear testimony, ask questions, and develop the best approach given the evidence and facts from other successfully implemented bottle deposit systems. These conversations have occurred over several decades in Rhode Island and the commission was able to thoroughly examine best practices because of the successful, full implementation in other states.

While we have submitted testimony in support of an individual bottle deposit system bill (H6206) also, it is only to highlight that any bill should include a bottle deposit system to increase recycling rates because of environmental impacts. However, we are thrilled to work alongside a wide-range of partners to promote proven measures



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to protect the environment and find additional ways to increase recycling rates through EPR. Such a wide-ranging coalition with evidence-based solutions could have only occurred from detailed research and proof that the combination can and will work to protect the environment and address certain beverage industry concerns. This bill's drafting is not a compromise, it is an effective collaboration.

We urge the committee to require a beverage deposit system as a key piece of any legislation related to bottle or packaging recycling rates. This bill does that, and more.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Kim Wheeler

Phoenix Wheeler (they/them)
Director of Advocacy

