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Subject: Michelle Cote - Against H7911 Testimony

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Michelle Cote
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Good afternoon,

My name is Michelle Cote and I own Al's Place in Woonsocket. I'm concerned that state legislators are moving forward with a bottle tax again. There's a reason that the proposal didn't pass last year: state leaders listened to the voices of their community and recognized that there are better ways to improve our recycling system. Why are we trying to pass this again?

The bottle tax would add a new 10-cent fee on families and local businesses like mine. We are already stretched thin with the high costs of living in Rhode Island and simply cannot afford a new tax. This bill also creates a huge opportunity for fraud in the system. People could easily buy their beverages in Massachusetts, where the deposit fee is less, and redeem them in Rhode Island for more. The state and eventually taxpayers would have to cover those costs.

Local businesses can't afford this, and our customers – many who are families just trying to get by – can't either. Last year, the legislature didn't move forward with the bottle tax and instead chose to look into better paths to reducing litter that do not mean higher costs. I ask that lawmakers continue to listen to their constituents and small shop owners and not move forward with this misguided and costly bottle tax.

Thank you.