



Testimony in support of House Bill 7911

**HEALTH AND SAFETY -- EXTENDED PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY FOR PACKAGING
AND PAPER ACT**

Amber Schmidt, NE Zero Waste Organizer, Clean Water Action

Dear Chair Bennet and Vice Chairs Representative Phillips and Representative Carson,
and all members of the House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB7911.

Rhode Island is grappling with the future of our landfill, which is expected to reach capacity by 2046. When that landfill closes, we will be faced with two options: find another landfill location in the state or pay the higher cost to ship our waste to out-of-state facilities. While we will inevitably face this question, there should be an immediate and intense focus on eliminating what materials are being sent there and prolonging the life of the landfill for as long as possible.

House Bill 7911 helps proactively address our waste crisis by creating Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for paper and packaging products and creating Rhode Island's first Recycling Reform for beverage bottles, previously known as a Deposit Redemption System (DRS), or Bottle Bill.

EPR programs are not a new concept to the Ocean State. Clean Water Action has campaigned and won EPR programs such as CFL light bulbs, mercury thermostats, mattresses, and paint recycling. Overwhelmingly, Rhode Islanders have applauded these initiatives, and these programs are successful.

A survey from The Mellman Group and Save the Bay in 2025 shows that nearly three quarters of participants are concerned that "Rhode Island's recycling system is not working" with "most beverage recyclables...ending up in landfills". In addition, [the University of Rhode Island researchers have found that the top two inches of the floor of Narragansett Bay contain more than 1,000 tons of microplastics](#). Microplastic breaks down in the environment from polluted plastic materials. Creating a deposit and redemption on beverage containers has been proven to reduce beverage bottle litter, which eventually makes its way into the Bay.



Rhode Islanders are familiar with bottle redemption. In my years of canvassing across the state, it was surprising how many residents thought we had a bottle deposit in place already. Many of us here live close to Massachusetts and Connecticut where we may work, or travel to run errands and shop for groceries where bottle deposits have been in place for decades. While those state programs work well, Rhode Island is uniquely positioned to have watched and learned from those programs in our bordering states and New England more broadly. Experts have weighed in, and Clean Water Action feels strongly that our combined EPR and Recycling Reform will meet the needs of our waste issue while implementing better practices gleaned from other successful state redemption systems.

Clean Water strongly recommends the passage of House Bill 7911.

Sincerely,

Amber Schmidt