

May 27, 2026

The Honorable David Bennett
Chairman, House Environment & Natural Resources Committee
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Chairman Bennett & Members of the Committee,

As Municipal leaders in Rhode Island, we are compelled to support policies that save our taxpayers money, clean up our communities and improve the quality of life for our residents. That's why we have come together to support a comprehensive recycling reform proposal at the State House.

Every city and town in Rhode Island is feeling the strain of an outdated recycling system. Even though most Rhode Islanders have access to recycling, the state is still recycling only 26 percent of recyclable packaging. Too many bottles, cans, boxes, and other materials still end up in the landfill or as litter on our streets, parks, neighborhoods, and shorelines.

This is not just an environmental problem. It is a taxpayer problem. Cities and towns are using local dollars to collect and process recyclables and cover the cost when loads are contaminated or rejected. Those expenses add up quickly. Meanwhile, materials that should be recycled are instead being buried at the Central Landfill, which is already under enormous pressure and is expected to reach capacity within 20 years. Rhode Island cannot afford to keep wasting recyclable materials, taxpayer money, and our limited landfill capacity.

The comprehensive recycling reform proposal, H7911 (McEntee) and S3012 (McKenney), offers a practical solution. The legislation combines two proven approaches: extended producer responsibility and recycling refunds. Extended producer responsibility would require the companies that put packaging into the marketplace to help cover the cost of collecting and recycling it. Recycling refunds would place a small refundable deposit on beverage containers, giving people a direct incentive to return bottles and cans for redemption and recycling. Together, these reforms would improve recycling performance, reduce litter, and shift financial responsibility away from local taxpayers and toward the producers of packaging waste.

For cities and towns like ours, the benefits are clear. Producer reimbursement would help cover the costs of curbside recycling, transfer station collection, infrastructure, education, and program support. That means relief for local budgets and better service for residents. Reforms such as these would save municipalities and taxpayers millions of dollars each year—as much as \$15.6 million annually.

These reforms would also directly improve the appearance and quality of life in our communities. Beverage containers are among the most commonly littered items in Rhode Island. Cleaner streets, cleaner parks, and cleaner waterways matter to every resident and every local government. Litter hurts neighborhood pride, burdens public works departments, and damages our natural resources. A system that captures more recyclable material before it becomes trash or litter is simply a smarter way forward.

Just as important, Rhode Islanders are ready for change. Multiple polls shows that most voters are concerned about landfill capacity and believe the current recycling system is not working. A majority also supports recycling refund legislation, especially as they learn about convenient, technology-enabled beverage container return options and Rhode Island's opportunity to build a modernized system that improves on older models used in other states.

We support this comprehensive recycling reform proposal because it is fair, practical, and overdue. It asks producers to take responsibility. It gives residents a better system. It saves taxpayer money. And it helps protect the beauty and health of Rhode Island for future generations.

Sincerely,

Mayor Brett P. Smiley
City of Providence

Mayor Roberto DaSilva
City of East Providence

Mayor Frank Picozzi
City of Warwick

Mayor Maria Rivera
City of Central Falls

Administrator Philip Gould
Town of Lincoln