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May 27, 2026

The Honorable David A. Bennett
Chair, House Environment and Natural Resources Committee
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: House Bill 7911 (McEntee) – Support – Can Manufacturers Institute

Dear Chair Bennett and Members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

The Can Manufacturers Institute (CMI) supports House Bill 7911, the Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging and Paper Act, sponsored by Representative Carol McEntee. CMI is the U.S. trade association representing metal can manufacturers and their suppliers. The industry employs over 28,000 individuals, with facilities located in 32 states, including New York and Connecticut in the Northeast. Our members take pride in producing the most sustainable packaging for beverage, food, and other products.

CMI strongly favors and supports legislation combining both extended producer responsibility (EPR) for paper and packaging with a recycling refund for beverage containers (i.e., a bottle bill or deposit return system). This approach delivers the most metal cans recycled and addresses litter. CMI believes that these two proven policies together will fund increased recycling access and infrastructure investment, while effectively motivating consumers to return their eligible beverage containers for their refund value. The dual approach lowers costs for Rhode Island municipalities since it shifts the cost for curbside recycling to brands whose product packaging ends up in recycling bins, as well as dramatically reduces litter such that municipalities do not have to spend as much on litter clean-up and street sweeping.

For the U.S. can industry, the enhanced volume of recycled scrap material captured in both EPR and bottle bill programs will mean more resilient, domestic supply chains so more recycled content is in the cans Rhode Islanders purchase and less virgin material is produced and imported. Recycling refunds for beverage containers have a significant impact on recycling rates. According to the Container Recycling Institute, beverage cans sold with a deposit in the ten bottle bill states have a 75% recycling rate while beverage cans sold without a deposit across the country have a 37% recycling rate. Importantly, that difference is with some of the existing bottle bill states having old systems where the deposit value has not changed and modern redemption technology has not been deployed.

How Rhode Island’s “Bottle Bill” Differs from Surrounding States

H 7911 is a modern approach to recycling refunds. The bill:

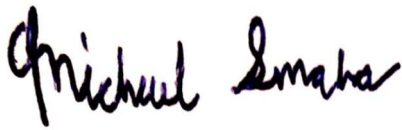
- Does not mandate retailers take back empty containers for redemption, but provides incentives for their participation in the program

- Establishes a 10-cent deposit value, higher than Massachusetts, New York, Maine and Vermont, sufficiently motivates consumers to redeem their empty containers
- Creates a mechanism for Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management to change the refund value if it becomes necessary
- Includes a convenience standard to ensure producers provide redemption options so Rhode Islanders can conveniently get their deposit back
- Utilizes modern redemption technology like reverse vending machines and bag drop will enable Rhode Islanders to get their refund back in seconds and allow for future innovation

EPR for packaging and a deposit program for beverage containers can complement one another. H 7911 appropriately ensures they will be complementary with their timelines, responsibilities, and coordination requirements. It also rightly has packaging being part of one or the other program so no producer (i.e., mostly consumer brands) pays fees under both programs for the same package.

In closing, CMI supports H 7911 and applauds Representative McEntee's leadership on the issue. The combined EPR and bottle bill approach is an opportunity for Rhode Island to be a national leader in recycling and waste management. Recycling refunds will meaningfully reduce litter in parks, streets, beaches, and oceans and EPR shifts the costs of the local recycling system for all recyclable packaging to producers, thereby remedying the current situation of taxpayers paying for a system that delivers only a 26 percent recycling rate. Doing both solves the most problems for Rhode Island and delivers the most material to domestic manufacturers. Our industry requires higher recycling rates of cans to support our domestic circular economy for aluminum and steel cans. As discussions continue in Rhode Island, we look forward to collaborating with you to advance these bills and assist the state in achieving its recycling objectives.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Smaha". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Michael Smaha
Vice President of Government Relations