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H7910, H7911 - OPPOSE

Chairman Bennett and Members of the Committee,

Rhode Island House Bills 7910 and 7911 would impose costly new mandates on small retailers and consumers at a time when operating expenses are already rising dramatically. Bottle bills and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) programs force neighborhood retailers to act as collection and waste processing centers without providing the space, staffing, or infrastructure necessary to manage those programs effectively.

These proposals will also increase costs for consumers through higher beverage prices, new fees, and added administrative expenses throughout the supply chain. Just as concerning, EPR programs remain an unproven solution, with many states experiencing high implementation costs, administrative complexity, and inconsistent recycling results.

Additionally, Rhode Island lawmakers already acknowledged the need for further study when passing 2025 House Bill 6207 Sub A, which directed the Department of Environmental Management to complete a needs assessment on these issues. That assessment remains incomplete. Moving forward with sweeping legislation before that process is finalized is premature and irresponsible.

Rhode Island should pursue practical recycling improvements that do not unfairly burden small businesses or increase costs on working families.

Signing on to legislation without a thorough understanding of costs to implement, operate, maintain, and support technology upgrades is reckless. Both pieces of legislation at hand will result in higher costs to consumers at a time where Americans are increasingly concerned about affordability.

Rhode Island should be focused on making improvements to our current recycling infrastructure, opposed to implementing another redundant, costly, privatized system that will run alongside our current system. Simply put, these pieces of legislation present additional consumer taxes that the public cannot bear.

I respectfully urge you to oppose House Bills 7910 and 7911.