

Dear Honorable Chairs McEntee and McKenney and members of the Commission:

My name is Renu Englehart and I am a member of the East Greenwich Town Council. I am here on my own behalf and I am providing a written copy of this comment to the commission. I am the member of the council that started the 1st ever Earth Day Clean Up in EG (in part because of the amount of roadside waste).

I am also a frequent hiker in RI's open spaces as well as a resident on a main road in East Greenwich, Division Rd (RI State Rt 401). Every day I pick up plastic bottles and plastic lined cans along my street and in the woods. The same persons who bring a full 6 pack or water bottles to RIDEM properties, do not seem to be able to carry those empty bottles and cans back home with them. I frequently pick up the same waste along my street. It is among the highest complaints I get from residents and businesses in East Greenwich. It is also a separate concern that the amount of this litter that is alcohol related and appears to be from persons drinking and driving.

I would point out that only NH and RI are without a bottle bill in New England. RI with its unique corner between CT and MA (both states with bottle deposit bills) is an outlier. The states with bottle bills have over 40 years of history behind them and while those states are not without litter, as far as I am aware, there has been no attempt to repeal it.

The complaints that you may hear from the manufacturers, the retailers and the beverage industry overall appear to be that either there is a cost or other ways to deal with plastics. I would like to point out that these groups are profiting from the waste that they are generating. No municipality or resident group alone has the resources or money that these industry groups do. While my town and others organize a yearly clean up, it is still well beyond our financial ability to deal with the sheer amount of it. We are reliant on volunteers, of which I would note, no manufacturer or producer seems to sponsor or send any compensation for the removal of their waste. So the industries that create and promote plastic waste are transferring the financial burden of its removal on our citizens.

Finally, my husband works for a European company and occasionally those members visit RI. Last fall one of them asked my husband why there was so much roadside waste in RI. In Europe there is a push for reusable bottles with certain products. We are a state that is heavily reliant on tourism. Our appearance is a key driver of why people visit. I would urge you to drive around this state as if you were a tourist. It is shameful that our lack of respect for the state that we live in is so visible in the trash we see daily.

Thank you for your time and your service to this commission.

Renu Englehart
East Greenwich