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Audubon Society of Rhode Island

June 5th, 2024

Representative David Bennett
Chair, House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02908

Re: Audubon Society of Rhode Island Supports H8312, Beverage Container Deposit Recycling Act

Dear Chairman Bennett and members of the House Committee on Environment,

The Audubon Society of Rhode Island and our 17,000 members thank Representative McEntee, Spears, Bennett, Fogarty, McGaw, Cortvriend, McNamara, Boylan, Kislak, and Carson for sponsoring this important legislation. Audubon has consistently supported an effective bottle bill for decades. We urge you to pass this bill to the floor for a vote.

Bottle deposit laws are the one proven way to substantially increase the collection of bottles. Rhode Island's bottle recycling rates are far behind our neighbors. Of the ten states with the highest recycling rates, including Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Vermont, eight have bottle deposit laws. Around the world we also see successful bottle deposit laws in countries like Germany and Austria where their collection rates are over 59%.

Last year, the legislature created a Special Joint Legislative Commission to Set and Provide Recommendations to Protect Our Environment and Natural Resources from Plastic Bottle Waste to look at plastic waste. The Audubon Society of Rhode Island participated, with board member Amy Moses as our representative. The Commission was thorough in its examination of bottle deposit laws and options, hearing from experts throughout the country as well as from interests concerned about the impacts of a bottle deposit law. The legislation before you is modeled on Oregon's producer responsibility system, the model that was best received by opponents to a bottle deposit law. This style of legislation has the producers in charge of the system, providing them with flexibility in how to meet the required rates of collection set forth in the legislation. This flexibility will allow the responsible producers to design a system that is convenient for all Rhode Islanders and effective in collecting all bottles and cans.

Rhode Island is decades behind our neighboring states in enacting a bottle deposit law. Vermont passed a bottle deposit law in 1973, Connecticut in 1978, and both New York and Massachusetts in 1982. Let's have 2024 be the year Rhode Island takes action to address the overwhelming amount of

bottles, cans, and nips that are not getting collected and recycled, but rather ending up in our streets, parks, cities, and waterways.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Phoenix Wheeler". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "P" and "W".

Phoenix Wheeler
Director of Advocacy