

Testimony in support of H8312: Beverage Container Recycling Deposit Act

Dr. Hans Scholl, 71 Fales Avenue, Barrington, RI 02806

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To Chair Bennett and the honorable Members of the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to testify to win your support for H8312.

We are drowning in plastic waste. It makes me outraged and sad to see the pollution when walking along our streets and in nature, and to see the amount of plastic trash being washed-up on our beaches.

An improvement of our current “recycling” methods is urgently needed. All states which run successful recycling programs do this by charging a deposit. These programs reach much higher recycling rates than those relying on collecting recyclables in recyclable bins with the household trash pickup, without using deposits.

Asides from giving customers an incentive to return their beverage containers to recycling, there is another positive effect of deposit systems. Cleanup often relies on volunteers, who spend their own time gathering plastic waste in our environment. These volunteers are unpaid, and a deposit would give them at least some financial return for their their service to our communities.

Recycling deposit bills have been introduced in our legislature for several years now. Unfortunately for our environment, these bills never passed, despite the successful deposit programs in other states, and despite broad support of the advocates of recycling deposits for Rhode Island. During the hearing of House Bill, H5502 on March 23, 2023 in the House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, overwhelmingly supportive testimony was given for a deposit as the most effective method to reach a higher recycling rate.

H8312 follows the work of the Plastic Bottle Waste Commission and introduces a comprehensive system for the recycling of beverage containers, with deposits being paid by the consumer, and the retailers or redemption centers being reimbursed a handling fee. The department of environmental management would provide for the establishment of a Producer Responsibility Organization, and for operation, and licensure of redemption centers. While not addressing the root cause—manufacturing and selling ever increasing amounts of plastic containers instead of using readily available sustainable and degradable alternatives—the bill will achieve much higher recycling rates in Rhode Island, as demonstrated in other states.

I urge you to support H8312 with its comprehensive and meaningful set of measures, to make recycling deposits a much needed success for the Rhode Island residents and environment. Do not wait another year.

Thank you very much for considering my input.



Dr. Hans Scholl

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