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June 4, 2024

Chairman David Bennett
Cc: Rep. McEntee
House Committee on Environment & Natural Resources
State House
Providence, RI 02903

Re: House Bill 8312- The RI Land Trust Council SUPPORTS the Beverage Container Deposit Recycling Act of 2024.

Dear Chairman Bennett & Members of the Committee:

The Rhode Island Land Trust Council (Council) is a coalition of over 50 land trusts – mostly all-volunteer, community-based organizations that protect and steward Rhode Island’s open spaces, farms, forestland, historic sites, and natural areas. The lands that we conserve protect valuable wildlife habitat and drinking water supplies, and provide critical outdoor spaces for public recreation. The Council supports the Beverage Container Deposit Recycling Act because bottle deposit return systems are proven to reduce litter.

Land trusts are responsible for the stewardship and monitoring of the important lands that they protect. Over 75% of land trusts in Rhode Island are all-volunteer organizations, made up of dedicated people who work hard to ensure that important lands are protected, maintained, and open to the public for recreation. Litter has always been an issue for our land trust community, especially those responsible for stewardship and management of land trust properties. These folks bear the burden of cleaning up after those who leave trash behind. Plastic bottles, especially nips, have become increasingly problematic over the years. Not only is this litter unsightly and a management concern, we also know that as plastics breaks down, they shed dangerous microplastics into the surrounding environment.

The Rhode Island Land Trust Council supports House Bill 8312 because States like our neighbors in Massachusetts and Connecticut have a higher rates of recycling, demonstrating that bottle container deposit systems work. Having incentives for consumers to participate in recycling programs ensures that containers are returned. Bottle deposit systems in other states have proven to significantly reduce litter. Not only are people incentivized to make the right choice about recycling their containers, they are more likely to pick them up off the ground.

The Rhode Island Land Trust Council believes that passing this important legislation will have significant impacts to reducing the litter that we see across our natural areas. We respectfully urge you to pass this important bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kate Sayles", is written over a light grey rectangular background.

Kate Sayles, Director