



RHODE ISLAND LIQUOR OPERATORS COLLABORATIVE

REPRESENTING RHODE ISLAND'S INDEPENDENT LIQUOR RETAILERS

H8312 - Oppose

5 June 2024

Dear Chairman Bennett and Committee Members:

The Rhode Island Liquor Operators Collaborative opposes House Bill 8312.

After twenty hours of meetings in the Special Joint Legislative Commission to Study and Provide Recommendations to Protect Our Environment and Natural Resources from Plastic Bottle Waste, we have learned quite a bit about bottle redemption programs. These programs have a vast range of success; some programs redeem as little as 40% of packages and others redeem much more. Where we have missed in this commission is cost. It is impossible for us, at this time, to submit a recommendation for any type of bottle redemption program because as commissioners, we feel a responsibility to make recommendations in the interest of taxpayers. Making recommendations at a time where we have no estimate of what a bottle redemption system will cost is something we cannot do.

When considering the cost to implement a bottle redemption program, return on investment for the State of Rhode Island should also be considered. How long will it take the State of Rhode Island, if a redemption system is implemented, to see a return on initial investment, and what impact will that system have on product cost to consumers? Furthermore, will the redemption system see a substantial increase in recyclable material recovery? Or are the funds intended to be spent on such a system better spent improving and modernizing our current system? These questions still need to be answered. Scientific studies, instead of anecdotal theories, need to be explored to satisfy these queries.

As commissioners, we know our work is not yet done. As we have stressed, we wish to be a part of the solution to the state's littering and waste problem. In our next chapter, we would like to take a deep dive into Rhode Island Resource Recovery's operations. Simply put, we feel that we have not received a comprehensive overview of Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation and the steps they take to process waste and recyclables. They are the largest piece of this puzzle and we simply need more information. Since our State adopted single stream recycling, our contamination rates have gone through the roof, which has added stress to our landfill. As our landfill is rapidly reaching its end-of-life capacity, the time is now to focus on improving, modernizing, and investing in our current infrastructure. If changes need to be made to modernize how we recycle, we should hear from those industry experts. Any investment in the modernization of Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation should be done with due diligence and a desire to preserve and protect the future of Rhode Island's natural resources.

The Rhode Island beverage alcohol industry does recognize the littering and materials problem that is occurring, not only in our state, but nationwide. We are happy to see that Governor McKee and DEM have worked together on the Litter-Free Rhode Island campaign. Governor McKee included a \$100,000 line item in the 2024 budget to be earmarked for litter mitigation grants. We would like to see this expanded and focused on.

Sincerely,

Nicholas A. Fede, Jr.
Executive Director
Rhode Island Liquor Operators Collaborative