

June 4, 2024

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

Re: The Nature Conservancy Supports H 8312 on the Beverage Container Deposit Recycling Act

The Nature Conservancy supports House 8312, which would enact a beverage container deposit recycling system in Rhode Island. We thank Representatives McEntee, Spears, Bennett, Fogarty, McGaw, Cortvriend, McNamara, Boylan, Kislak, and Carson for sponsoring it.

The Nature Conservancy is a global organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Here in Rhode Island, The Nature Conservancy protects more than 14,000 acres of land and has partnered on the permanent conservation of more than 35,000 acres.

Plastics are a growing pollution issue across the state. At The Nature Conservancy, we are seeing this pollution first-hand. As just one example, TNC was a partner with CRMC and DEM on the 2019-2020 dredging of the Providence River, and again in 2022- early 2023. The dredging was regularly interrupted by equipment becoming ensnarled in trash (particularly plastics) – which not only polluted our waterways but added significant time and expense to the dredging project.

In addition, the University of Rhode Island recently did a study of microplastics present in Narragansett Bay. The study found around 1,000 tons of microplastics in the top 2 inches of bottom sediment in the Bay, with higher levels in the upper Bay near the urban centers. TNC marine scientists study the fish populations in the upper Bay and the important role it plays for the marine life of the larger Bay. Microplastics are both a global and local issue, impacting human health, marine ecosystems, and quality of life in Rhode Island.

To address the large-scale, harmful problem of microplastics, a Bottle Bill is a reasonable solution to reduce the quantity of plastics in our environment. We are supportive of the provision that plastic containers 50 milliliters and up to 3 liters are subject to the deposit system, understanding that most of the litter and marine debris falls within this category. We also appreciate that there are clear targets for redemption to ensure increased levels of program success.

Plastic pollution is a problem with real solutions. The Bottle Bill is a sensible and foundational policy that will begin to address this issue. We respectfully request that this bill moves forward.

Sincerely,



Angela Tuoni
Climate Programs Manager
The Nature Conservancy, Rhode Island Chapter