

OPPOSITION to SB 549 AN ACT CONCERNING THE EXPANSION OF THE BEVERAGE CONTAINER REDEMPTION PROVISIONS

**Testimony of Michael DeFeo
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Senator Williams, Representative Widlitz and distinguished members of the Environment Committee, my name is Michael DeFeo, I am the Vice President of Coca-Cola Bottling New England. I'm here today to testify in opposition to SB 594 An Act Concerning the Expansion of the Beverage Container Redemption Provisions. Consumer preference and advancements in recycling are leading us away from a redemption system and towards enhanced curbside recycling.

Since the enactment of the CT Bottle Bill Coca-Cola has sought to achieve the policy goals of the act-decreasing litter and increasing recycling. In our efforts to comply with the law we have worked to improve our own proficiency in utilizing redemption process as a recycling means. However, the inefficiencies of the redemption system have lead our company to believe the current system is counterproductive to the goals of the law. Expanding this system to additional beverage containers would simply compound these existing inefficiencies.

A forced deposit-redemption system is a cumbersome, uneconomical approach to recycling. Our bottle law bears a cost of \$500-\$700 per ton. In comparison the cost to recycle the same product at the curb is only \$150.00 per ton. When the Bottle Bill was first passed recycling programs were at their infancy. Today in compliance with DEP policy every community has a recycling program, allowing consumers to place recyclables products in blue bags or bins. Apartments, dormitories and condo complexes all have separate containers for recyclables. Separating at the home has become customary and more convenient for busy families.

Being the first of our neighbors to expand redemption to non-carbonated containers will hurt CT businesses, forced to redeem deposits for containers purchased outside CT, which no deposit was collected for. For Coca-Cola it would create a bottling and shipping nightmare. Our non-carbonated beverages are not bottled and distributed on a state by state basis, but from centralized distribution centers as demanded. In addition, as we have learned from the redemption system for carbonated beverages, re-handling of product adds cost, a cost that must be paid for by consumers.

If the goal is encourage recycling we should be transitioning our state policies to a comprehensive recycling system partnered with educational outreach for consumers.

Expanding our antiquated Bottle Bill will not only hamper CT' advancements in the future, but will actually threaten existing recycling programs by once again removing recyclables with a value from the recycling stream. Coca-Cola Bottling New England is committed to being responsible partner in CT recycling and welcomes the opportunity to participate in any discussions or efforts going forward to increase our efficiency and success.

