Dear Members of the Committee,

The Container Recycling Institute (CRI) supports Sections 27 and 28 of Governor’s Bill SB 10. Section 27 would update Connecticut’s beverage container deposit law, or “bottle bill,” by placing a 5-cent deposit on most non-carbonated beverages, and on wine and liquor; Section 28 would set the deposit on wine and liquor at 25¢.

**Updating the deposit law to include these beverages is an idea whose time has come.** When Connecticut’s bottle bill was enacted in 1978, it applied to carbonated beverages like soda and beer. Over time, other beverage types were introduced and took a larger market share, and Connecticut responded by adding water to its deposit law in 2009. The new beverage types that are proposed this year – juice, sports drinks, tea, coffee, wine and liquor – amounted to more than 230 million bottles and cans in Connecticut in 2016. A variety of noncarbonated beverages are included in container deposit laws in other states, like Hawaii, Oregon, California, and Maine. Iowa, Maine and Vermont’s laws include wine and/or liquor.

**There is ample precedent for putting deposits on non-carbonated beverages, wine, and liquor.** The U.S. deposit states of Maine, Hawaii, Oregon and California have all successfully incorporated a wide range of non-alcoholic, non-carbonated beverages to their deposit laws (like juice, tea, sports drinks, etc.) Vermont has a deposit on liquor, while, Iowa and Maine have deposits on liquor and wine. Their overall 2017 redemption rates were quite a bit higher than Connecticut’s:

- California: 77%
- Hawaii: 65%
- Oregon: 82%
- Vermont: 75%
- Maine: 84%

The higher redemption rates in these states suggests that **having deposits on a broader range of beverages might reduce consumer confusion**, and might therefore lead to higher redemption rates across the board. The **higher deposit values for wine and/or liquor (15¢ in Maine and Vermont)** also create an undeniable financial incentive for consumers and others to save more containers for redemption.

**More than 57,000 tons of non-deposit glass, plastic and aluminum** are generated annually in Connecticut: that is a lot of material for local taxpayers to manage via municipally-funded curbside recycling, or trash pickup and landfilling. The latter—landfilling—is much more prevalent. The **vast majority of non-deposit, non-carbonated beverage containers sold are wasted**: not recycled, but rather landfilled or littered. Specifically, we estimate that the non-deposit, non-carbonated beverage container recycling rates are as low as 12% for glass, 18% for PET plastic, and 46% for aluminum cans. **We estimate that more than 44,000 tons of non-deposit glass, over 5,000 tons of non-deposit plastic, and about 220 tons of non-deposit aluminum cans are wasted in Connecticut annually.**
Cities and towns would benefit financially from adding wine, liquor, and other non-carbonated beverages to the deposit system, because their collection and processing costs for both recycling and trash collection and disposal would go down. In Ontario, Canada, the City of Toronto documented cost savings of $448,000 in 2007 as a result of putting wine and liquor containers into the deposit program. The cost savings were due to a reduction in processing and disposal costs.

Municipalities will also save money on litter cleanup costs if non-carbonated beverages, and wine and spirits, are brought into the deposit system. Many wasted containers end up as litter along roadways, beaches, streams, parks and other public places, posing both an aesthetic nuisance and a financial cost to taxpayers for cleanup. CRI estimates that the current bottle bill saves Connecticut taxpayers and private businesses $2.3 million annually in avoided litter abatement costs. If non-carbonated beverages are brought into the deposit system, those savings are projected to increase by $200,000 per year.

Adding non-carbonated beverages would be a boon to glass recycling. Glass recycling is challenging for some communities in Connecticut, because single-stream curbside recycling programs produce mixed-color, broken, and contaminated glass that has a low value. Glass from single-stream programs can cost as much as $20/ton to recycle—when markets can be found for it at all—versus clean, separated deposit glass that has a $20/ton positive scrap value. CRI estimates that a 5¢ deposit on non-carbonated beverage bottles, and a 25¢ deposit on wine and liquor, would increase the amount of uncontaminated glass being recycled through the deposit-refund program by more than 31,000 tons: in contrast to fewer than 6,000 tons of non-carbonated and wine and bottle glass currently collected at curbside.

Replacing those wasted bottles and cans with new ones made from virgin materials produces almost 21,000 tons of greenhouse gas emissions, and other forms of pollution, resource depletion, and ecosystem damage. CRI estimates that a 25¢ deposit on wine and liquor bottles would lead to an 80% redemption rate for those bottles, which—combined with a minimum of 50% recycling of other non-carbonated beverage containers—would recycle more than 33,000 new tons of bottles and cans annually, reducing greenhouse gas emissions by more than 11,000 metric tons of CO₂ equivalent per year. That is like taking over 2,200 cars off the road.

Finally, we estimate that unclaimed deposits from the proposed new beverages that consumers choose not to redeem would generate approximately $7.5 million per year in new revenue for the State of Connecticut. We based this estimate on current sales patterns, on a 50% redemption rate for new non-carbonated beverages with a nickel deposit, and on an 80% redemption rate for wine and liquor bottles with a 25¢ deposit.

For all of these reasons, we support Sections 27 and 28 of the Governor’s Bill SB 10, which would strengthen the Connecticut container deposit program: the most effective recycling program in the state. Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments. Please contact me with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Susan Collins
President, Container Recycling Institute

About the Container Recycling Institute: CRI is a nonprofit organization and a leading authority on the economic and environmental impacts of beverage containers and other consumer-product packaging.