Chairperson Lisa Cutter  
Vice Chair Dominick Moreno  
Zero Waste and Recycling Interim Study Committee  
Colorado General Assembly  
200 E Colfax Avenue  
Denver, CO 80203  

By email: lisa.cutter.house@state.co.us, dominick.moreno.senate@state.co.us, ZeroWasteComm.ga@state.co.us

Dear Representatives Cutter, Moreno, and Members of the Committee,

We are writing in support of the proposed beverage container deposit law now before the Zero Waste and Recycling Interim Study Committee.¹

For almost 50 years, beverage container deposit laws, or “bottle bills,” have been successful in achieving recycling rates that are up to 3 times higher than those of bottles and cans without deposits. As the graphic at right shows, 63% of aluminum cans with a deposit were recycled nationwide in 2017, in contrast to 45% of cans lacking a deposit. The differences for bottles are more pronounced: 47% vs. 18% for non-deposit PET plastic, and 53% vs. 17% for non-deposit glass.

Colorado’s proposal has two notable features:

- **It would initially set the deposit at 10¢.** Michigan and Oregon, the two U.S. states with dime deposits, have achieved much higher redemption rates—89% and 81% respectively in 2018—than the deposit states with nickel deposits (where redemption rates range from 50% to 75%). Ten cents is a strong financial incentive for people to return containers rather than throw them in the trash or litter them. When consumers who purchased the beverage do not directly take bottles and cans in for refund, there are always other groups and individuals ready to step in and do the redemption for them as a means of generating supplemental income.

- **After 2026, it would require the deposit to increase to 15¢ if a 70% redemption threshold is not achieved for two consecutive years.** This provision is similar to one that Oregon used as means to combat the flagging value of the nickel due to inflation by raising the refund value to a dime. The results were immediate: in 2018, the first full calendar year after the dime deposit was adopted, the overall redemption rate reached 81%—up from 64% in 2016.

¹ “A Bill for An Act concerning the recycling of beverage containers, and, in connection therewith, establishing a refund value on each beverage container sold in the state.”
Increasing beverage sales nationwide has led to burgeoning bottle and can waste. Based on national statistics, CRI estimates that 73% of the 4.8 billion beverage bottles and cans sold in Colorado in 2017 were wasted: littered, landfilled, or incinerated. That level of consumption and wasting represents a significant burden on taxpayers: whether through city-run recycling programs or municipally-contracted trash pick-up and disposal.

Deposits have multiple benefits, including:

- **Achieving higher recycling rates** than municipal programs alone.
- **Transferring** the financial and operational responsibility for recycling from the local taxpayer to the manufacturers and distributors of disposable beverage containers.
- **Adding value to local and regional economies** through the sale and processing of scrap materials.
- **Avoiding greenhouse gas emissions and reducing energy use** by displacing virgin materials in manufacturing.
- **Reducing litter** that is expensive for public and private entities to clean up, and that leads to injuries in people, farm animals, and wildlife.

Deposits on beverage containers are now available to over 300 million people worldwide. With the announcement of 12 new deposit laws (including India, Turkey, and the United Kingdom), 600 million people will have access to deposits by 2021. This trend is projected to continue as more nations realize that deposits are a vital part of the solution to the problem of bottle and can waste.

In sum, CRI strongly supports the passage of a beverage container deposit law in Colorado.

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.