February 23, 2016

To: Members of the Massachusetts General Court:

As experts in environmental protection, public health, conservation, water quality and waste reduction, we are unanimous in our opposition to House Bill 646, entitled the “Universal Recycling Law.” While that title sounds appealing, the bill does three things, all of which we reject:

• it repeals the long-effective 5¢ refundable container deposit,

• it initiates a 1¢ tax on distributors and wholesalers, which is supposed to fund a huge program that cannot possibly be supported by that revenue, and

• it provides for the tax to only last three years, with no solution for the future.

This bill is a thinly veiled attempt to let big beverage companies off the hook completely, and saddle the rest of us with more beverage container litter and trash.

The fact remains that the single most effective recycling tool we have in Massachusetts is the 5¢ refundable container deposit. Approximately 70% of containers with a deposit are recycled, compared to 23% of containers without a deposit. The same beverage companies and big retailers who want to shirk the responsibility for beverage container
litter and trash have been working to repeal the deposit system for years; this bill is simply their ‘cover’ for doing so.

We are all supporters of the refundable deposit, and we know from 30+ years of its track record of success that if the deposits were expanded to cover water, juice and other on-the-go containers, we’d reduce litter, divert trash, and increase recycling across the state. H646 should be rejected, and more serious and fact-based recycling policies should be advanced.

Signed,

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