March 6, 2014

Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy
Hon. Benjamin Downing, Senate Chair
Hon. John Keenan, House Chair
Room 473B
State House
Boston, MA 02133

Re: Support for Bill H.3848/Updating Massachusetts’ Beverage Container Recycling Bill

Dear Chairmen Downing and Keenan and members,

I am writing on behalf of the Container Recycling Institute to urge your support for of Bill H.3848 to update Massachusetts’ Beverage Container Recycling Bill. Bill H.3848 would modernize the state’s 34-year old Bottle Deposit Recycling Program, to include more beverage types, such as iced teas, bottled water, energy and sport drinks. Modern bottle bills are proven to be highly effective, low-cost and environmentally strategic.

The Container Recycling Institute’s 2013 report on container recycling rates and trends in the United States, “Bottled Up: Beverage Container Recycling Stagnates (2000-2010),” reveals that per capita consumption is now three times higher than it was 40 years ago. Non-carbonated beverages accounted for all of the non-alcoholic sales growth over the last decade, while soft drink sales dropped by 10%. Nationwide, bottled water sales increased by more than 400%, from 8 billion units in 2000 to 45 billion units in 2010. Bottled Up found that we waste nearly two out of every three beverage containers in the United States, and that even as beverage sales increased (up by 22% from 2000-2010), the rate at which we recycled the empty containers declined over the past decade. Of the 243 billion beverage packages sold in the U.S. in 2010, the report found 63% were landfilled, littered or incinerated - a whopping 20% jump since 1990. In other words, we are wasting more and more beverage containers than we are recycling – a trend that needs to be reversed.

In 2010, in Massachusetts alone, non-carbonated beverages were 39% of the beverage market in 2010. CRI estimates that nearly 1.9 billion non-carbonated beverages were sold in Massachusetts in 2010 (in glass, PET and aluminum). According to the January, 2014 issue of Beverage World magazine, projections show that bottled water sales in 2018 are expected to be 42% higher than 2010 sales levels. Growth rates for tea drinks are robust, but slightly lower than bottled water, while growth rates for energy drinks are projected to be even higher than bottled water. If the Massachusetts container deposit law is not expanded, the State will see larger and larger quantities of bottles and cans landfilled each year, simply due to the growth rates of non-carbonated beverage sales.
Many states have added or expanded beverage container deposit programs when there was already an existing, robust curbside system in place, and in each case the results are positive: a dramatic increase in beverage container recycling, reduction in beverage container litter, and a continuation of curbside programs that can collect more materials than before.

- In 2009, Oregon, New York and Connecticut expanded their programs to include water. In New York, water bottles had a recovery rate of less than 20% before the change. Today recovery rates for these new containers are significantly higher.
- In 2000, California expanded its program to include water, sports drinks, tea and coffee, juice and other beverages. This expansion added 3.5 billion containers to the program, and those containers now have an 82% recycling rate. California is a model of success in comparison to other U.S. States because it also has robust municipal curbside recycling. Due to a number of parallel recycling programs, the State-wide recycling rate is 65%, which is among the highest in the country.

Modernizing Massachusetts’ Bottle Deposit Recycling Program will Result in More Green Jobs and Shift Recycling Costs from Local Governments to the Beverage Industry

- Recycling programs create four to ten times as many local jobs as disposal and incineration.
- Recycling bottles via curbside recycling programs is more costly than deposit-return programs, and the curbside programs are not paid for by industry.

Expansion of the Bottle Bill will Improve the Quality of Recycling, Save Energy and Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions

- Currently, the plastics recycling industry operates at less than 65% of capacity. There is strong demand for new feedstock to meet the ever-growing demand for recycled resin material. Demand is never the problem; plastic recyclers can sell whatever they reclaim to companies looking to include recycled content in their products. The issue has always been the ability to source good, clean material. The proposed expansion of the Massachusetts bottle bill would provide needed feedstock to sustain and grow plastics recycling as an industry.
- Beverage container recycling saves energy, natural resources, and reduces the production of toxic chemicals in the manufacturing process. Recycling significantly diminishes all of the inputs needed to make the replacement product from virgin materials.

If the beverage containers in Massachusetts aren’t recycled through the Bottle Deposit Recycling Program, what will happen to them?

- Most of the beverage containers will be disposed or incinerated, resulting in a loss of valuable materials for recycling, an increase in greenhouse gas production, and losses in recycling-related jobs.
- Many of the containers will become litter, fouling the waterways of Massachusetts and adding to the litter cleanup costs of local municipalities.
Curbside Recycling Programs are not an Alternative to Container Deposit Legislation

- Curbside programs only target the single-family households that have been provided curbside recycling service. They do not target the other waste streams that contain beverage containers, like multi-family housing, bars, restaurants, hotels, offices, the entire commercial sector or public spaces.
- In states that have both container deposit legislation and comprehensive curbside recycling, the majority of containers are recovered through the deposit system. For example, in California, only 8% of beverage containers are recovered through single-family curbside recycling programs – the rest are recycled through redemption centers.
- In every US state and Canadian Province that has high recycling rate goals, they use both curbside programs and container deposits to achieve their goals.

History shows us that by adding more container types to existing container deposit systems, recycling rates rise, and landfilling and littering rates will decline. Traditionally, mitigation of litter was a primary reason for the implementation of deposit return programs. Recent data from Northeast states, Hawaii, Canada and the Great Lakes states confirms that container deposit laws reduce beverage container litter by half, on average.

Founded in 1991, the Container Recycling Institute (CRI) is a 501 c(3) national non-profit organization that studies and promotes policies and programs that increase recycling of beverage containers and packaging. CRI is the model organization instrumental in bringing about a rapid increase in recycling for a world where no material is wasted, and the environment is protected. Our mission is to make North America a global model for the collection and quality recycling of packaging materials.

Please contact me with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Susan V. Collins
President

Deposit States Have Higher Beverage Container Recycling Rates

Beverage Containers as a Percentage of Total Litter