Speaker Tom Leonard, III  
District 93  
Michigan House of Representatives  
P.O. Box 30014  
Lansing, MI  48909-7514  
TomLeonard@Michigan House.mi.gov  

Dear Speaker Leonard,

The Container Recycling Institute opposes the following bills before the Michigan House of Representatives: HB 6532, 6533, 6534, 6535, and 6536. Together, these bills would collectively repeal the state’s beverage container deposit law, or bottle bill.

**Michigan’s container deposit law has a redemption rate of 91%, the highest in the nation. Rather than repeal the bottle bill, it is time to expand it to include the 3.3 billion bottles and cans of non-carbonated beverages sold per year that are not currently on deposit.**

It is time for an update to keep up with changing consumer habits and market conditions. When the bottle bill was enacted in 1976, there were no single-serve non-carbonated beverage on the market, so covering only carbonated beverages allowed the state to exclude milk, infant formula, and wine & liquor.

Now, however, **non-carbonated beverages constitute 42% of the market**. Beverages such as water, sports & energy drinks, fruit & vegetable drinks, iced coffee & tea, and wellness beverages amount to **3.3 billion bottles and cans sold per year**, and represent a significant litter problem. They also impose a heavy financial burden on cities and towns who must recycle or dispose of them at a cost that exceeds their market value. We believe Michigan should update its deposit law, following the lead of six U.S. states, nine Canadian provinces, and dozens of countries worldwide.

In contrast, **repealing the bottle bill would have numerous adverse effects:**

- **Littering would increase** if the 10¢ financial incentive to recycle was removed. The Department of Transportation, the state park system, municipal governments, and businesses would incur approximately $13 million dollars in new costs from injuries, farm damage, and cleanup along Michigan roadways, parks, and beaches, and other public places and private venues.

- **Wasting would increase** because curbside collection and public space recycling programs produce lower recycling rates than deposit recycling. In 2017, Michigan recycled 91.2% of deposit containers, but nationwide in 2015, only 32% of non-deposit containers were recycled. Specifically, CRI has estimated that **2.2 billion** new bottles and cans would be trashed in Michigan as a result of repeal: or more than **150,000** new tons of container waste annually. Landfilling this would create more than 200,000 tons of additional greenhouse gas emissions (like putting almost 41,000 more cars on the road), and **$32 million in lost material revenue** to the Michigan economy.

- **Municipalities** would face millions of dollars in new annual costs for additional curbside recycling and trash disposal for the 3.5 billion containers formerly recycled through an industry-managed and industry-funded system.
It is a myth that PET and aluminum recycling can significantly mitigate the high costs of curbside recycling, and that myth also obscures the fact that the majority of beverage containers, by weight, are glass.

Curbside recycling costs would increase because collecting much higher container volumes requires more equipment and more labor, and because the value of these materials is degraded once they have been collected at curbside and processed in materials recovery facilities (MRFs). In contrast to source-separated, clean deposit material, MRF-processed containers—especially plastics and glass—are typically more broken and contain contaminants such as ceramics, non-bottle glass, non-recyclable metal and plastic, and dirt. They are also often mis-sorted into the wrong bales, and themselves become contaminants. Poor quality material commands lower, and even negative, scrap prices.

**Yesterday, on December 3rd, the Michigan the bottle bill celebrated its 40th anniversary.** Due to the 10¢ deposit, Michigan has consistently enjoyed a higher beverage container recycling rate than any other U.S. state.

Over the last four decades, the bottle bill has recycled 96% of the 150 billion carbonated beverages sold, including 8,000 tons of PET plastic bottles, 1.5 million tons of aluminum cans, and 8 million tons of glass bottles.

40 years of **environmental benefits** of recycling 10.5 million tons of bottles and cans include:

- Saving enough aluminum to build about 38,000 Boeing 737 MAX airplanes
- Reducing greenhouse gases equivalent to taking 3.4 million cars off the road for one year
- Avoiding more than $500 million in litter cleanup costs and injuries

40 years of **economic benefits** of recycling these bottles and cans include:

- $2.5 billion of material revenues in today’s dollars, boosting Michigan’s economy
- Jobs in the recycling industry which benefit thousands of Michiganders
- An estimated $358 million in unclaimed deposit revenue for statewide toxics cleanup and pollution prevention
- About $120 million in unclaimed deposits returned to grocers since 1989

Thank you for giving CRI the opportunity to submit our comments about opposing a repeal of the bottle bill, and our suggestion to update it to keep up with the times. 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.