



**Testimony of Miriam Gordon, Reuse Director, Story of Stuff Project  
New York State Joint Legislative Budget Hearing - Environmental Conservation  
February 7, 2024**

**Modernize the Bottle Bill and Prioritize Refill in the State Budget; Pass the Packaging Reduction and Recycling Infrastructure Act (S4246-a/A5322-a)**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on the two measures: S4246-a/A5322-a. The Story of Stuff Project is a national environmental organization with over a million supporters, 2,000 of them in New York State, whose mission is to change the way we make, consume, and dispose of all the stuff in our lives. We support these measures provided that you:

- Pass the Packaging Reduction and Recycling Infrastructure Act S4246-a/A5322-a - but Keep it Out of the Budget; and
- Add reuse targets for beverage bottles into the Bottle Bill.

**I. The Packaging Reduction and Recycling Infrastructure Act**

The legislature should pass the Packaging Reduction and Recycling Infrastructure Act, S4246-a (Senator Harckham) and A5322-a (Assemblymember Glick), as soon as possible. The bill has 34 senate cosponsors, 74 assembly cosponsors, widespread grassroots support from over 200 organizations as well as support from the Association of Counties, Albany County, Tompkins county, the City of Rochester, and the New York City Mayor, NYC Comptroller, and New York City Department of Sanitation.

**S4246-a/A5322-a will:**

- Reduce plastic packaging by 50%, incrementally over the next twelve years; ● Save hundreds of millions of tax dollars by requiring companies to pay for the management and recycling of packaging waste, rather than taxpayers.
- Provide new revenue to local governments,
- Save tax dollars by reducing the amount of waste being trucked to landfills and incinerators, which are often located in environmental justice communities. ● Prohibit certain toxic chemicals in packaging including: PFAS, lead, mercury, formaldehyde, bisphenols, toluene and others;
- Improve recycling;
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and
- Not allow chemical “recycling”—a false solution advanced by the plastics industry that

creates more pollution—to count as recycling.

- Not allow loopholes that would leave packaging out of the program

Each section of this bill is critical to reducing waste at the source, reducing emissions, protecting health and communities, and it's important that it pass outside of the budget process in order to achieve the strongest program possible.

It's important to note that the chemical and plastics industry is advocating for so-called chemical recycling to be considered real recycling. This would be a mistake. Chemical recycling technologies are highly polluting, expensive, and mainly turn plastic waste into fuel to be burned. It should not be included in the definition of recycling and this distinction should be consistent in other bills, including the Bottle Bill.

## **II. Amend the State's 40 year old Bottle Bill to Include a Requirement for Reusable Bottles and Pass it in the Budget**

We urge the legislature to pass a strong Bottle Bill expansion that includes:

- A minimum ten cent deposit;
- Require deposits on non carbonated beverage containers such as sports drinks, iced teas, and lemonade;
- Increase the handling fee;
- Environmental standards that, at a minimum, require 25% of beverage containers to be reusable within a reuse system by 2030 to reduce plastic pollution; and
- Clearly exclude “chemical recycling” from any definition of recycling .

While we clearly need to recycle more single-use beverage containers, reducing the overall quantity being produced with reusables makes much more economic and environmental sense. [Recognizing this, Coca-Cola has pledged to transition 25% of its bottles to refillables by 2030](#), and other large beverage manufacturers have made similar pledges in recent years. But Coca-Cola and other beverage companies are only taking meaningful action in countries with mandatory, binding targets for reuse that hold beverage producers responsible for meeting them. The legislature should codify refillable container requirements in the Bottle Bill.

Including refill in the expansion of the Bottle Bill is an incredible opportunity to greatly reduce climate emissions and pollutants and plastic pollution in our waterways. [Between 21 and 34 billion one-liter PET bottles \(706,000 to 1.1 million metric tons\) enter the ocean each year, Oceana estimates that just 10% reusable beverages could reduce marine plastic pollution in coastal countries by 22%, with 20% reuse resulting in a 39% reduction in plastic pollution, and 50% reuse yielding an 83% decrease in plastic pollution.](#)

Reusable bottles also have economic potential for the state. The reverse logistics of getting back, washing, and refilling containers would create new local jobs and opportunities.

We strongly urge the inclusion of reuse targets.

Sincerely, Miriam Gordon, Story of Stuff Project