



January 28, 2026

Testimony in Support of The Modernization of the Container Deposit System
(aka the Bigger Better Bottle Bill)
for the Joint Hearing on Environmental Conservation/Energy

I am submitting this testimony to urge the New York State Assembly and the New York State Senate to include in their respective one-house budget proposals the provisions of the Bottle Bill. As other written and spoken testimony on this issue has emphasized, increasing the deposit on beverage containers from a nickel to a dime and expanding the kinds of beverages requiring a deposit would dramatically increase the funds going into New York State government through unredeemed deposits. People who can afford not to redeem their bottles and cans will not suffer any adverse effects.

As a not-for-profit serving thousands of low-income and vulnerable people each year, Catholic Charities is well aware that the cost of basic necessities is out of reach for far too many New Yorkers. By including the modernization of the deposit system, our State government can raise revenue without burdening people with higher taxes or cuts in vitally important social programs.

It is important to state that increasing the deposit, which has been a nickel for over 40 years, is not a tax. People can redeem their beverage containers and get their money back. The 10 cent deposit doesn't make groceries more expensive. Moreover, the increase in the deposit will help the thousands of New Yorkers who search for containers to redeem. These "canners", Catholic Charities clients among them, help our communities by gathering redeemable containers from streets, parks, and businesses that would otherwise toss them into the garbage. Supporting this modernization is another way to make life more affordable for New Yorkers who are struggling to make ends meet.

Another provision in the modernization of the deposit system is a long overdue increase in the handling fee paid to redemption centers. The stand-alone businesses that redeem millions of containers each year and rely solely on that fee for income have not had a raise for 15 years. This is simply not sustainable. Hundreds of them have gone out of business in the last few years. If you as legislators want to maintain the most effective recycling effort in our State, namely the beverage container deposit system, you must strengthen this system, not oversee its collapse. Our State needs redemption centers to make the deposit system truly work for New Yorkers.

Added to all of these financial reasons for supporting the modernization of the deposit system are the environmental ones. The DEC's Solid Waste Management Plan, release two years ago, sets an aggressive target of recycling 85 percent of the state's municipal solid waste (MSW) stream by 2050. However, the governor's budget includes very little to address the solid waste problem or to meet the DEC's goal. It is up to you to ensure that this omission is corrected.

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The solid waste crisis is not just an abstract problem. It is negatively impacting people's health, their property values, and their quality of life. Environmental degradation hurts people on the margins "first and worst" and having too much garbage to deal with is just one example illustrating that unfortunate reality. Litter degrades neighborhoods and public spaces where marginalized people have to live. People without the economic means to move away from landfills and incinerators suffer the consequences to their wellbeing. Please bear in mind the New Yorkers at the receiving end of the solid waste crisis as you create your budget proposal.

The modernization of the container deposit system is a straightforward way to improve the lives and livelihoods of New Yorkers across this state and to ensure that useful material (glass, aluminum, PET plastic) is re-used instead of burned, buried, or tossed on the ground.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.

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