

Written Testimony of James A Gregorius
Owner Livonia Redemption Center

PRESENTED TO:
NEW YORK STATE SENATE
2026 Joint Legislative Budget Hearing
Environmental Conservation/Energy
January 25, 2026

I am writing to try to save the New York State Redemption industry from catastrophic failure. I have heard from lawmakers every year since 2017 tell me “We know you need help, we should do something this year.” How is it that nothing changes? The current handling fee structure, which has not seen any increase since 2009, is driving more and more businesses to close. At last count, over 200 out of the 700 registered Redemption Centers in New York have been forced to close (GO OUT OF BUISINESS) in the past 24 months. That accounts for almost 30% of the entire industry, an industry that is mostly Mom and Pop small businesses that help support major recycling efforts in their areas. There has been a complete lack of help from Albany lawmakers to help us adjust to inflation, handle the over 13 increases in minimum wage, and help us bring in new products to recycle due to lack of legislative action. Not to mention the added utility costs, skyrocketing refuse and insurance costs that has made most Redemption Centers struggle in the current economic environment. Many owners in rural locations would be making more money working at a Redemption Center than they do owning a Redemption Center!

Being part of the family business since 1994, we have seen many ups and downs this industry. But a 30% loss of businesses across New York State should be a red flag that something needs to be done IMMEDIATELY! This current lack of change, influenced by big businesses with lobbyists and millions of dollars, truly feels like the David vs Goliath battle that many of us

cannot win. During the pandemic shutdown a Sheriff Deputy knocked on my door at my home, I was told that my business was essential and that I HAD to reopen. At that time we were essential, but since then our lawmakers have just ignored us and by default drive us out of business. We desperately need help, there are 2 immediate avenues can help save Redemption Centers at this juncture:

1. *A standalone rescue bill increasing handling fees from the current 3.5 cents to 6 cents immediately as proposed by Senator Sepulveda(S5820a) and Assemblyman Ramos (A6267)*
2. *Passing of the Bigger Better Bottle Bill (BBB). S05684(May)+A06543(Glick) (Which will increase handling Fees from 3.5 cents to 6 cents immediately then ultimately to 7 cents in 2 years, Raise the deposit from 5 cents to 10 cents, and increase the bottles and cans that would have a deposit. Many of these products have not been around that long, but are produced in containers that are identical to ones that currently have deposit such as Iced Teas, Hard Ciders, Fruit Juices, etc*

**** As a side note, the passing of the BBB would add an estimated \$100 million to the state budget in unclaimed deposits that would not affect constituents that return their Bottles and Cans.

At this point urgent action needs to happen. Locally the landfill is currently scheduled to close in 2028. Every effort to reduce the quantity of material going to this and all landfills needs to be reduced. It has been proven that year after year, the majority of Redemption Centers, despite being small businesses, contribute to an over 86% recycling rate, a rate that is far above and beyond any other program!

*****February 2024

According to the Container Recycling Institute, a non-governmental organization dedicated to researching recycling and collection in the United States, the main

opponents of the legislation are bottlers such as PepsiCo, Coca Cola and Anheuser Busch.

With the deep pockets of these industry giants, years have already been lost fighting what should have been a logical decision to help the “Little Guys” and make this world a better/cleaner place. Something needs to be done to keep the Redemption Centers of New York open and legislation needs to be passed. This would be a HUGE win for both the environment as well as over 500 Small Businesses in New York State! At this point I give this decision to you, our New York State Legislators, can and will you help us now?