



**Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy
In support of H3289/S2149: An Act to expand the bottle bill
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The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts offers this testimony in full support of H3289/S2149: An Act to expand the bottle bill. The League supported the original bottle bill passed into law in 1983—with a Coke bottle containing a rose on each legislator’s desk. A lot has changed since then, including the range of single use beverage containers now available to the public. While the 1983 law was appropriate to the time and type of single use beverages prevalent almost 40 years ago, it is not appropriate for the huge increase in single use containers on the market today. Neither is the 40-year-old, nickel deposit. The “new” class of containers includes water bottles, iced coffees and teas, vitamin drinks, and assorted other beverages, on the scene for several decades.

Massachusetts disposes of 6 million tons of waste a year. Fully 14% of that waste comes from beverage containers. At a time when landfills around the country are closing, incinerators have been identified as a health risk due to polluted particulate residue from the combustion process and toxic leachate from ash fields that hold what hasn’t gone up in smoke, and the cost of waste disposal perpetually on the rise for municipalities, doesn’t it make sense to reduce waste where we can?

Bottle bills are not radical or exotic approaches. They are tried and true methods in place in Massachusetts and other states with a record of demonstrated success in removing single use beverage containers from the waste stream. In fact, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection describes the bottle bill as the greatest recycling success story in our state.

Discarded beverage containers are a major source of litter on our streets, beaches and waterways. They are also a waste of resources and energy, a critical factor as we face the threat of accelerating climate change and the Commonwealth has committed to achieving 100% net zero emissions by 2050. Plastic bottles are made from fossil fuels and do not reflect the life-cycle cost of the associated intensive and polluting extraction, transportation and processing involved in their production. Only 9% of plastic bottles are recycled. The bulk of the 3.4 billion plastic beverage containers purchased in Massachusetts annually end up in incinerators and landfills to contaminate our water, air and soil. New uses are being found for recycled glass which is 100% recyclable without any loss in quality. Adding just 10% recycled glass content to new glass containers would reduce CO₂ emissions from that process. Recycling aluminum, the most



valuable of the recyclable materials, saves 90% of the energy used in manufacturing new aluminum.

The Massachusetts deposit system applies to less than half of the beverage containers that could be included. This is a system that is seriously out of step with the times and in need of an upgrade - an upgrade that includes the support and engagement of the manufacturers and producers of these products and their containers. This bill will make the deposit system more user friendly for consumers and, based on our own experience and that of other states with similar laws, will reduce the amount of usable material from our waste stream and the useless waste of energy and resources in that material.

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts, representing 47 local Leagues from Cape Cod to the Berkshires, once again urges this Committee to give its full support to passage of H3289/S2149.

Thank you for your consideration.