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## OLR Bill Analysis

### sSB 457 (File 479, as amended by Senate "A" and "B")\*

#### ***AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE'S BOTTLE BILL.***

#### **SUMMARY**

This bill makes changes to the state's beverage container redemption law ("bottle bill"). (The state's bottle bill generally requires a deposit to be charged on each beverage container at the time of purchase, which is then refunded to the consumer when it is redeemed at a retailer or redemption center.) Principally, the bill:

1. prohibits collecting or charging a refund value on beverage containers not purchased in Connecticut and makes violations a class A or B misdemeanor or class D felony depending on the volume of containers and
2. requires the reduced handling fees for certain redemption centers imposed under PA 26-2 to be discontinued starting on July 1, 2027, or when the redemption center uses specified scanning technology to redeem beverage containers at its facility, whichever comes first, rather than requiring that they be discontinued starting July 1, 2027, only for redemption centers that use the technology.

\*Senate Amendment "A" removes provisions in the underlying bill that would have (1) required the formation of a bottle stewardship organization; (2) required the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to study the effectiveness of Public Act 26-2, request an attorney general report if it was not effective, and report to the Environment Committee; (3) increased the amount of unclaimed bottle deposits deposit initiators must remit to the General Fund; (4) generally required distributors and deposit initiators to accept scrap equivalents, and pay refund values and handling fees for dealers and redemption centers that use certain reverse vending machines; (5) required

distributors to generally remove empty beverage containers after receiving notice from a dealer or redemption center; and (6) banned dealers and redemption centers from misrepresenting the size, brand, or quantity of beverage containers given to distributors. The amendment adds the class D felony provision.

\*Senate Amendment "B" amends the penalty provisions by (1) applying them to any person, rather than only dealers, who violate the prohibition and (2) making clarifying changes to the violations subject to a class A or B misdemeanors. The amendment also adds the provision on redemption center handling fees.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026, except the provision on redemption center handling fees is effective upon passage.

## **PENALTIES**

By law, dealers (those who engage in the sale of beverages in beverage containers in Connecticut, but not redemption centers) cannot collect or charge a refund value on containers purchased outside of Connecticut. Violators are fined according to the bottle bill's existing penalties (CGS §§ 22a-244 & 22a-246, as amended by PA 26-2; see BACKGROUND).

The bill imposes higher penalties for any person who willfully collects or charges a refund value on containers purchased outside of Connecticut. Specifically, under the bill, willfully collecting or charging a refund value on containers purchased outside of Connecticut, or directing another to do so, for 5,000 to 19,999 containers in one or more transactions during a calendar year is a class B misdemeanor (punishable by up to 6 months in prison, a \$1,000 fine, or both). Willfully doing so, or directing another to do so, for 20,000 to 30,999 containers in a one-year period is a class A misdemeanor (punishable by up to 364 days in prison, a \$2,000 fine, or both). Finally, willfully doing so, or directing another to do so, for 40,000 or more containers in a one-year period is a class D felony (punishable by up to five years in prison, a \$5,000 fine, or both).

The bill specifies that this does not apply to a common or contract carrier, or warehouse worker, that is lawfully transporting or storing beverage containers as merchandise. It also does not apply to the employees of those carriers or workers that act within the scope of their employment.

## **REDEMPTION CENTER HANDLING FEE**

By law, distributors generally must pay dealers and redemption center operators, in addition to the container's refund value (the 10-cent deposit), a handling fee of 2.5 cents for each container of beer, hard seltzer, or other malt beverage, and 3.5 cents for each container of mineral water, soda water, or similar carbonated soft drink or other non-carbonated beverage returned for redemption.

PA 26-2 reduces, for the period of April 1, 2026, to June 30, 2027, the per container handling fee paid to certain large volume redemption centers by up to one cent. The reduction applies to redemption centers that (1) annually process an average of 50 million or more beverage containers and (2) do not use automated barcode or universal product code (UPC) scanning to redeem all beverage containers. Under PA 26-2, the reduced handling fee ends July 1, 2027, for redemption centers that use the barcode or UPC scanning for this purpose.

The bill instead ends the reduction July 1, 2027, or when a redemption center uses that technology for redeeming all beverage containers, whichever is earlier.

Unchanged by the bill, for determining if the reduction applies, DEEP, in consultation with DRS, must confirm the average beverage container processing volume of redemption centers. Existing law requires redemption centers to quarterly report on how many containers they redeem.

## **BACKGROUND**

### ***PA 26-2 and Bottle Bill Penalties***

PA 26-2 makes a series of changes to the state's bottle bill. Among other things, the act increases the fines for violating the bottle bill's

requirements to: (1) \$500 to \$750 for a first offense; (2) \$750 to \$1,000 for a second offense; and (3) \$2,000 and a class A misdemeanor for any third or subsequent offense (and allows civil penalties to be brought). It also gives municipal police enforcement authority over these violations.

***Related Bill***

SB 516 (File 701), favorably reported by the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee, among other things, (1) reverts the deposit on beverage containers to 5 cents from 10 cents under certain conditions and (2) allows certain deposit initiators that were over-redeemed to apply to the Office of Policy and Management for full reimbursement of their loss.

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Environment Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 19 Nay 15 (03/18/2026)

Judiciary Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 37 Nay 4 (04/24/2026)