

Environment Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: SB-457 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE'S BOTTLE BILL.

Vote Date: 3/18/2026

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/13/2026

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Environment Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

The purpose of this bill is to (1) require the development of a product stewardship program for beverage containers sold in the state, (2) examine the legal implications of requiring state-specific labeling for beverage containers sold in the state, (3) establish a timeline for the picking up of beverage containers by distributors, (4) prohibit transshipment of beverage containers, (5) require the acceptance of certain processed beverage containers by distributors, (6) make permanent certain escheat distributions from beverage containers, and (7) prohibit the act of short bagging by redemption centers.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Katie S. Dykes, Commissioner, CT Department of Energy & Environmental Protections (DEEP)

Commissioner Dykes discusses **Senate Bill No. 457**, which aims to improve the state's bottle redemption system through measures like creating a beverage container stewardship program, studying labeling requirements, setting pickup timelines, preventing fraud (like transshipment and short bagging), and strengthening enforcement rules. DEEP supports the bill's overall goals—especially improving redemption rates and reducing fraud—but raises several concerns: **Stewardship organization (Section 1):** DEEP supports creating this group and sees it as a useful model. **Study and reporting timeline (Section 2):** DEEP says deadlines are too tight and won't allow enough data to produce a meaningful report; suggests revising the timeline. **Labeling requirements:** Need more discussion and legal clarity, possibly involving the Attorney General. **Distributor requirements (Sections 3–4):** Some enforcement provisions (like fines) fall outside DEEP's authority, and new regulatory duties (e.g., vending machine standards) would require expertise and resources DEEP currently lacks. **Penalties (Sections 6–7):** The bill creates unclear enforcement responsibilities and

penalties that don't align with DEEP's usual practices. DEEP supports the intent of the bill but recommends changes to timelines, responsibilities, and enforcement details to make it workable and effective.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Susan Eastwood, Chair, Ashford Clean Energy Task Force

Susan Eastwood, suggests that S.B. No. 457, be amended to reduce unnecessary administrative burdens. Alternatively, she suggest to increase the handling fee so centers can remain financially viable. Connecticut has a very successful Bottle Bill, a model for our country. The issue of bringing in bottles from out of state in order to get the ten cent deposit is concerning, but we shouldn't allow a few unscrupulous people to undermine the Bottle Bill. Eastwood urges to not reduce the deposit and keep it at ten cents. Establishing the Bottle Bill Stewardship Organization, she notes, would ensure that the bill is administered well, and funding is necessary to enforce the law. Amending S.B. 457 in these ways will protect the Bottle Bill, strengthen recycling, and support the community based operators who keep this system running.

Mike Noel, Director of Public Affairs, TOMRA

Mike Noel of TOMRA supports SB 457 because it aims to improve Connecticut's bottle deposit system by letting the beverage industry manage it through a Stewardship Organization and by promoting bulk reverse vending machines (RVMs), which make recycling faster and more efficient. He mentions that TOMRA has already invested in modernizing the system—introducing bag-drop returns, high-speed bulk RVMs, expanded pickup services, and handling large-scale deposit payments—helping the program grow since its 2021 update. That modernization has doubled redemption locations, created over 1,600 jobs, and kept billions of containers out of landfills. However, Noel argues the bill needs stronger anti-fraud measures. His key recommendations include: **Enabling enforcement** (including cross-border investigations) to catch fraud. **Strengthening rules around RVM** cooperation to ensure fraud prevention features are used. **Updating the definition of RVMs** to include compaction technology that prevents repeat redemptions. **Studying and addressing “trans-shipment” fraud** (unregistered distributors avoiding deposit payments). He also supports creating a Stewardship Organization but stresses it must be accountable, timely, and collaborative, with clear deadlines and public input.

Rachel Precious, Chair, Surfrider Foundation CT Chapter

On behalf of the Surfrider CT chapter, Precious supports SB 457 and to urges to include an update to make 50mL alcohol “nip” bottles part of the bottle deposit program. She mentions that while herself, the chapter, and many community members throughout Connecticut feel that the sale of nips should be banned, they believe that placing a 10 cent redemption fee on the bottles, in place of the current 5 cent surcharge, is a crucial first step towards reducing the amount of 50mL bottles that are clogging up our streets, parks, and coastline. Precious states without proper recycling protocols or incentivization through redemption, we're seeing more and more of these bottles in our environment every day. She notes that every month, Surfrider hosts beach cleanups throughout our state, and in addition to cigarette butts and bottle caps, nip bottles are the most prevalent item they find during their cleanups. In fact, two years ago, their volunteers collected over 350 in just one hour from a popular public beach here in Connecticut. They believe in stopping pollution at the source, not dealing with it once

it's in our environment. Including nips in the deposit program will incentivize consumers to hang on to their bottles rather than discard them.

Alan Siniscalchi, President, CACIWC

The CACIWC writes their support for the bill SB 457, urging legislators to pass this bill which will improve the states bottle recycling programs including require the development of a product stewardship program for beverage containers sold in Connecticut, improve acceptance of certain beverage containers and distributor recycling timelines, and study methods to reduce illegal recycling of containers purchased out of state including the use state-specific beverage container labeling.

Over 18 Citizens expressed support for this bill.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Representative Vincent Candelora, House Minority Leader-Republican Caucus, State of Connecticut, District 86

Representative Candelora opposes SB457, arguing it fails to address problems caused by Connecticut's increase in the bottle deposit from \$0.05 to \$0.10. While redemption rates appear to have risen sharply, Representative Candelora claims the data is misleading because it excludes curbside recycling and may be inflated by fraud, particularly out-of-state bottle returns. Some distributors are reportedly facing redemption rates over 100%, forcing them to pay for deposits they never collected. The representative warns this could lead to legal challenges against the state under the Fifth Amendment (Takings Clause), as distributors are being required to bear financial losses for a public program without adequate compensation. Although a recent law (SB299) offers temporary financial relief, the representative doubts it will be sufficient. Instead, he argues that the real solution is to lower the deposit back to \$0.05 to reduce fraud and financial strain, and they urge rejection of SB457.

James P. Toner, Director of Government Relations, International Bottled Water Association

The International Bottled Water Association (IBWA) opposes SB 457, arguing it would undermine recent reforms made by SB 299, which were designed to reduce fraud in Connecticut's bottle deposit system. They believe SB 299 should be given more time to work before new changes are introduced. IBWA also argues that: **State-specific labeling** proposed in the bill is unconstitutional under the Commerce Clause and has already been struck down in court. The proposed **stewardship organization (PRO)** gives too much control to the state instead of being industry-led, which they say is the most effective model. While IBWA supports bottle deposit systems in general, they recommend improvements such as: Industry-led governance, use of unclaimed deposits to fund recycling programs, better access to recycled materials for reuse (supporting a circular economy), strong fraud prevention measures, and convenient recycling options for consumers. IBWA believes SB 457 is flawed and urges lawmakers to reject it and instead focus on strengthening the existing system.

Francis Bartolomeo, Owner, Frans Cans-Barts Bottles

The owner of a small redemption center in Watertown, Connecticut, Bartolomeo, opposes Bill SB457, arguing it would harm small businesses like theirs. They say the bill would force them

to rely on reverse vending machines (RVMs), reducing their income and potentially leading to layoffs or closure. The owner believes redemption centers already operate on very small margins and that customers prefer human service over machines. They feel the bill unfairly benefits distributors—especially beer distributors—while underpaying redemption centers compared to soda and water returns. Bartolomeo also expresses frustration that recent legislation adds more burdens instead of supporting small operators, and argues the bill could undermine the state’s recycling success rather than improve it.

Susan Collins, President, Container Recycling Institute

Susan Collins opposes the bill SB457 unless it’s amended, arguing that while creating a Producer Responsibility Organization (PRO) could help improve the bottle deposit system, the current bill is flawed. She highlights existing problems in Connecticut’s system, including over-redemption, out-of-state bottle returns, and producers underreporting sales or avoiding deposit obligations. Collins argue that other regions have successfully addressed these issues using well-structured PRO systems. The main concern is that the bill incorrectly places responsibility on the PRO instead of individual producers. The producers should be clearly defined, fully accountable, and either join a PRO or manage compliance independently. She recommends the following improvements: Stronger definitions of “producer” to include all sellers (including online and on-premise), Clear legal responsibility for all producers, The ability to form one or more PROs with proper oversight, An auditing system to catch companies avoiding payments (“free-riders”), and Stronger fraud detection and enforcement, including on-site monitoring.

National Waste and Recycling Association (NWRA), Connecticut Chapter

The National Waste & Recycling Association (NWRA) opposes Senate Bill 457, arguing that bottle bill programs—like the one proposed—are inefficient and harmful to existing recycling systems. They claim these programs divert valuable materials (like aluminum cans) away from curbside recycling, making municipal recycling more expensive and less effective. NWRA also argues the bill would add unnecessary complexity by creating a new statewide stewardship organization and imposing additional regulations on businesses, increasing costs for both companies and consumers. They emphasize that Connecticut already has strong curbside recycling infrastructure supported by significant private investment, and that removing valuable materials from this system could undermine those investments. Instead of expanding bottle bill programs, NWRA recommends improving and modernizing the current recycling system to achieve better environmental outcomes more efficiently.

Brian Crawford, President & CEO, Beer Institute

The Beer Institute opposes Senate Bill 457, particularly a provision that would study requiring state-specific labels on beverage containers. They argue such labeling laws have already been ruled unconstitutional in other states (like New York and Michigan) because they burden interstate commerce, so a Connecticut study would be unnecessary and reach the same conclusion. They warn that state-specific labeling would force manufacturers to create separate production and distribution systems just for Connecticut, increasing costs and complexity. Instead, the Beer Institute suggests addressing fraud in the bottle deposit system by lowering the deposit amount. They argue that the recent increase in deposits has led to more fraudulent redemptions, financial losses for wholesalers, and higher costs for consumers.

Liz Donahue, Representative, Primo Brands

Liz Donohue, representing Primo Brands (Poland Spring), opposes most of Senate Bill 457, arguing it would undermine recent reforms made by SB 299 to improve Connecticut’s bottle deposit system. Primo supports recycling and circular packaging efforts and agrees with some parts of SB 457, but strongly objects to provisions that would: **Prevent distributors from verifying and auditing redeemed bottles**, which she says would increase fraud and costs. **Require acceptance of unidentifiable containers**, making the system harder to manage and more vulnerable to abuse. **Introduce state-specific labeling**, which she argues is impractical and has already been challenged in court. **Add administrative burdens**, such as changes to escheat rules, without meaningful benefit. Primo argues that SB 457 would weaken system integrity, increase fraud, and raise costs for businesses and consumers, and that policymakers should instead build on the improvements made in SB 299.

The following owners all expressed opposition to the bill for the following reasons. They all emphasize that redemption centers are essential to Connecticut’s recycling system but opposed certain aspects of SB 457 that increase their regulatory burden. They argue that redemption centers are service providers—not enforcement agencies—and should not be tasked with additional monitoring and compliance responsibilities. Recent reforms and new requirements (like eCert) have already increased operational complexity and costs, forcing small businesses to invest heavily in equipment and systems while operating on thin margins. They contend that these new rules do little to address the main source of fraud (such as out-of-state container returns) and instead disproportionately burden legitimate operators. Without financial relief—such as higher handling fees—many redemption centers could close, reducing public access to recycling and harming the overall system. They urge lawmakers to revise SB 457 by easing compliance requirements, reject additional penalties under Section 7, increase the handling fee by at least one cent per container and improve pickup frequency to prevent backups. Finally, they ask for support for redemption centers to ensure their long-term sustainability.

Alish Garala, Owner, Vernon Bottle Return

Priyal Garala, Owner, East Haven Bottle Return

Ratilal Garala, Owner, South Windsor Bottle Return

Shahil Kantesaria, CEO, RecyclIX LLC

RecyclIX argues the bill would undermine infrastructure, reduce recycling rates, and fail to address fraud effectively, and recommends focusing instead on modern technology, stronger infrastructure, and more balanced system governance.

The following individuals and organizations expressed opposition to the bill regarding similar reasons stated above.

Andy Ginsburg, General Manager, Hartford Distributors

Bhargav Patel, Owner, Manchester Redemption

Dipak Patel, Owner, Capitol Redemption Center

Frederick Ross, Manager, Redemption Centers

Jay Vachhani, Operator, Cash Can Redemption

Over 20 citizens expressed opposition to this bill.

Reported by: Luna Romani

Date: 03/26/2026

