



PO Box 7114
Wilton, CT 06897
norwalkriver.org

Re: S.B. 1037: An Act Concerning Solid Waste Management

March 16, 2021

Dear Senator Cohen, Representative Borer, Ranking Members Senator Miner, Representative Harding and distinguished members of the Environment Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the Norwalk River Watershed Association (NRWA) which represents over 2000 participants working together to protect water quality and fish and wildlife habitat in six CT towns-- Norwalk, Wilton, Ridgefield, Redding, Weston, New Canaan--to ask for your support of S.B. 1037: An Act Concerning Solid Waste Management as it pertains to the Committee's efforts to update and expand Connecticut's Bottle Bill and authorize CT DEEP to create incentives for municipalities to adopt Unit Based Pricing.

Every year NRWA writes a letter in support of updating and expanding CT's Bottle Bill. The passage of this bill is unbelievably overdue. It is very clear to organizations like ours, which lead river and shoreline cleanups, that CT is experiencing a waste disposal crisis. NRWA volunteers pull thousands of pounds of trash out of the Norwalk River every year. We sponsor annual cleanups as part of The Ocean Conservancy's International Coastal Cleanup Day (ICC). We have found, and the ICC project has verified statewide, that plastic bottles are one of the top ten items most likely to be found littering CT's waterways. In 2019, the Ocean Conservancy collected more than 10 thousand beverage containers across the state in that single day. Year after year, most containers recovered from litter cleanups are products that are not currently covered by the bottle bill.

Please help return Connecticut to its former position as a leader on this issue. We write to stress the need for these updates to the current bottle bill:

- **Increase the deposit** from 5 cents to 10 cents which will help to increase redemption rates. Giving individuals a measurable incentive to redeem their containers increases the likelihood that people will make a consistent effort.
- **Expand the universe of containers** included in the Bottle Bill to include those frequently used by consumers will broaden the reach of the program to capture as many containers as possible. Increasing the categories of redeemable containers increases the probability that popular containers will make it to redemption.
- **Increase the handling fee-** the handling fee paid by the distributor for each container collected has also not been adjusted over time. Raising the handling fee will benefit retailers and

redemption centers and help ensure that consumers have ample, convenient access to container redemption services.

Connecticut's waste disposal crisis is only accelerating because:

- Regional Waste to Energy (WTE) facilities are aging (all over 30 years old).
- Regional landfill capacity will shrink by another 40% in the next 5 years.
- As disposal locations close, new locations are not being built.

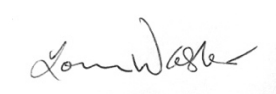
It is imperative that we reduce waste as much as possible in order to manage disposal within our state borders and to keep disposal costs as low as possible for Connecticut residents.

In addition to updating the Bottle Bill, incentives to adopt Unit Based Pricing (UBP) present an effective way to reduce waste, increase recycling and decrease waste-related greenhouse gas emissions.

- Over 500 municipalities in the region have unit-based pricing in place. These communities dispose of 45% less waste per capita than those without UBP
- Shifting the cost of waste disposal directly to the user is more equitable than the current system. Today, those who reduce, reuse and recycle well, are paying the same as those who make no effort at all.
- As municipal waste disposal costs continue to increase, so will property taxes. UBP reduces solid waste budgets (keeping taxes down), creates fairness and gives hardworking families control of their own waste expenses going forward.
- Less waste through UBP eliminates the need to site new facilities and can begin to reverse the environmental and social injustice associated with waste disposal.

Please make 2021 the year Connecticut acts to reduce plastic pollution and increase rates of recycling by passing SB 1037. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Sincerely,



Louise Washer, President
Norwalk River Watershed Association

[New Canaan, Norwalk, Redding, Ridgefield, Weston, Wilton, Lewisboro NY](#)