



**Testimony of Alison Vanderhoof in Support of LD 1909**  
**"An Act to Modernize Maine's Beverage Container Redemption Law"**  
**Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources**  
**May 12, 2023**

Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich, and Distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources my name is Alison Vanderhoof, I am the out-going CEO of CLYNK, and here today to testify in Support of LD 1909

Hannaford, by law, must be a licensed redemption center at each of its Maine locations. At 55 of those locations, they have subcontracted CLYNK to provide those redemption center services. CLYNK uses a consumer-facing process called Bag Drop. At unmanned parking lot depots, and bottle rooms within stores, consumers drop off bags, made of recycled plastic, that are labeled with a barcoded tag that associates the bag with their online CLYNK account. Those bags are filled with mixed beverage containers. The bags are scanned-in creating a record that they exist within our computer system. The containers within the bag are subsequently counted, confirmed to be redeemable, and then the deposits are credited to that consumer's online account for future withdrawal. When the consumer bags are empty, they are recycled, made into things like railroad ties and decking. This consumer offering is called Bag Drop. Despite the fact that 25% of all containers returned in ME today come in through Bag Drop, it is not recognized in the current Bottle Bill – the only methods of returning deposits to consumers that are defined in the bill are handcount and reverse vending machines. When CLYNK started, the law didn't reflect the way we wanted to operate, so we have been regulated under the definition of reverse vending machines (RVM) in the law, though we are clearly different.

When the parking lot depots reach capacity, often several times each day, the consumers' bags are transported to a CLYNK processing facility in Oakland or Biddeford. The bags are scanned again, confirming receipt in the computer system, emptied on a conveyer belt, counted again for the consumer, and then using a highspeed mechanized process containers are scanned, and sorted – specifically for invoicing manufacturers and distributors (Initiators) and returning their containers. Like a pickup agent does for a traditional redemption center, CLYNK returns these containers in full trailer loads of compact form commodity (crushed 1 ton bales, or large dumpsters of crushed glass) which makes the loads very efficient for a recycler buyer to transport away from the state. Most of our initiator partners do not touch these containers again – they send their chosen commodity buyer straight to the CLYNK dock to pick up their material so that they can reap the value of that commodity. Again very efficient. This back end of the Bag Drop Process is called Account-Based-Bulk-Processing or ABBP, and is also not contemplated in the current (antiquated) Bottle Bill.

CLYNK was the first company in the United States introduce Bag Drop and ABBP. We hold several patents and now license the capability to other states, and it is quickly becoming the preferred Redemption Mode across the country. Last year our Maine facility was operational every day of the year, 22 hours each day, 7 days a week. We can process about 800K containers daily using our old processes, and 2-3 times that with new processes that we are innovating. We are edging close to 2 billion containers processed in our 17 years in business. That's equivalent to 24 major league baseball stadiums filled with containers.

CLYNK's reason for being is to make recycling easier and more rewarding for consumers, while keeping it cost efficient for those who pay for these services. We have long recognized that high recycling rates depend on the participation of all consumers, not just die-hard environmentalists, but also know that reaching those reluctant consumers gets more and more expensive as they need an increasing level of convenience to draw them in.

As our volume has increased, and we expand our Maine-based company into national markets, we continue to explore new technology with the goal of creating a more efficient, and still accurate, approach to account-based bulk processing of containers. Here we are focused on lowering costs for producers and distributors. In order to



encourage innovation there needs to be room in the law to test ideas that will lower costs, this room is not there today The law also needs to be modernized to reduce the environmental impact, emissions, and cost of unnecessary transportation

The Cooperative proposed in this program is inclusive of the entire industry and that's important for continuous, practical improvement that benefits the most participants We should continue to find pathways to reduce costs, and appropriately allocate the containers to the producers CLYNK's data is invaluable in this process and in calculating the overall rate of return

We agree with the position of others that there should be a pathway to assist Maine's small producers, and we believe this bill should help them reduce costs Participating in a commingling group and cooperative should give them the combined size required to result in more reasonable pickup fees While we know the handling fee increase created deep concern for producers, small producers in Maine report paying a disproportionate share of unregulated pickup costs, some citing a total of 16 cents or more per container That can and should be tackled with both regulation and/or with the unclaimed deposits, and I encourage the Committee to consider either or both

Among contributions from other Bill participants, LD1909 reflects the evolution of our industry and the innovation of the 150 Maine-based employees of CLYNK's hard-working team that continues to develop a recycling technology company here in our state Recognizing Bag Drop and Account Based Bulk Processing, is not only the accurate way to describe these activities but it will also acknowledge the pride we, and the state of Maine, should have as a leader in the country for establishing a strong, in-demand recycling program that I should mention is also forward-compatible with EPR, another place where Maine has big goals and a leadership position It is no stretch to imagine using your CLYNK account to track any number of recycled materials, and when coupled with our state's existing Independent Redemption Center network we have a really compelling practical combination for future success

If this bill passes, CLYNK will work within the Department's guidance to continue the development of efficient and accurate container processing for initiators It's our goal to demonstrate that we can accurately provide data and improve the system so each party involved can find benefits I want to thank the Committee and applaud the bill sponsors, for the careful consideration contained in this reform bill and I'm happy to answer any questions about CLYNK or the redemption process

\*\*\*