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May 15, 2023

Senator Stacy Brenner, Chair  
Representative Lori Gramlich, Chair  
Members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee

**RE Comments on LD 1909, An Act to Modernize Maine's Beverage Container Redemption Law, and LD 1910, An Act to Amend the Returnable Beverage Container Program**

Dear Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee

My name is Curtis Picard and I am the President and CEO of the Retail Association of Maine. I am a resident of Topsham. We have more than 350 members statewide and represent retailers of all sizes. Maine's retailers employ more than 85,000 Mainers. We are here today to provide comment and input on two proposals to change Maine's beverage container law.

We are aware of the stress that Maine's beverage redemption program has been under, and know that the reasons for that are not simple or for a singular reason. We met with Scott Wilson and other folks from the Maine DEP last year to talk about the issue, and try to understand the challenges and possible solutions.

We agree that Maine's beverage redemption program needs changes, and that simply providing more money for the program will not solve the major problems. One of the important changes is to simplify the hundreds of bottle sorts to a more manageable system that focuses more on that container material like glass, aluminum, and plastic. Between LD 1909, and LD 1910, we do not have the knowledge or experience to say which method would best achieve that, or if there is some amalgam of the two. Regardless, we are supportive of a simplified sorting system which seems to be one of the major pieces of any reform.

We do have one specific concern with a provision in LD 1909, Representative Hepler's bill. We have spoken with her, and she seemed open to changes to that section. Sec 14 38 MRSA §3106, sub-§1 of the bill proposes changes to the existing agreement dealers (which would be retailers) have with redemption centers. As we understand it, these changes were proposed to try to address areas where there may not be a redemption center. As drafted, the changes proposed in this section are not workable.

We have looked at the map of current redemption centers, and we are hoping that data could be overlaid with population concentrations, and with existing local transfer stations. By looking at all three data points, we think that could help identify where gaps may exist, and how many gaps we may be

dealing with We think specific areas that do not have available redemption centers can be addressed in a different way One of the considerations should be whether area transfer stations can be a possible solution to these gaps in coverage

We have significant concerns with proposals that would require any retailers that sell beverages (regardless of how small those sales may be) to accept beverage containers when they are not in the business of doing so Retailers have very limited storage, and are not in the position of being reverse retailers LD 1910 makes a nod to this discussion by stating, "Engage with retailers to ensure a balance between retail redemption and alternatives " We are happy to continue working with bill sponsors and other stakeholder to try to find alternatives

In closing, we are supportive of ongoing stakeholder discussions of improvements to the bottle bill We know it is not likely that all the issues can be adequately addressed in LD 1909, and LD 1910 We are happy to participate in any process this coming year

Thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts

Sincerely,

Curtis Picard, CAE  
President and CEO