



Testimony Neither For Nor Against LD 479
*An Act to Facilitate Expansion of the State's Recycling Efforts Under the
Beverage Container Redemption Program*
Sarah Nichols, on behalf of the Maine Redemption Center Association
March 17, 2025

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera and distinguished members of the committee on environment and natural resources, my name is Sarah Nichols and I am here on behalf of the eight members of the Maine Redemption Center Association (MRCA) to speak neither for nor against LD 479.

Maine's redemption centers are the backbone of the state's bottle bill program, providing convenient, personable, and immediate-payback services while employing hundreds of Mainers and keeping our communities clean. These small businesses are proud to play a critical role in ensuring the recycling and reuse of beverage containers.

We appreciate the intent behind LD 479 and see no harm in requesting that the Department consider expansion in its annual report. However, as those working on the ground every day, we urge careful consideration of the operational and logistical impacts of adding additional containers, especially larger containers, containers that are prone to smell (like milk), and the bill's focus on glass:

Operational Challenges to Consider:

- **Space Constraints & Sorting Burden:** Many redemption centers operate in tight spaces. Expanding the program without careful planning could overwhelm facilities, especially after recent efforts to ease sorting requirements.
- **Glass Handling Difficulties:** Glass is particularly challenging—heavy, fragile, and often returned unclean. Many centers already struggle to manage the high volume of glass, especially in peak seasons. If

additional glass items are added, they should not require further sorting.

- Reverse Vending Machines (RVM's): Many redemption centers use this technology to help with sorting, compact storage, and ease of reporting and payment. We are concerned that additional containers may not yet be accepted in existing machines and could add costs.

If expansion is pursued, we encourage an approach that prioritizes:

- High-Value or High-Litter Materials over glass: The deposit system should focus on collecting large volumes of valuable recyclables and/or materials frequently found as litter.
- Strategic Timing: The Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging law set to roll out in 2026-2027 will reshape and enhance municipal recycling. Any expansion of the bottle bill should be considered in coordination with this shift, and maybe wait until that program is underway.
- Thinking Beyond Packaging: Some redemption centers could serve as depots for materials beyond packaging—especially for items that take up less space but are difficult to collect through traditional recycling.

Maine's bottle bill has been incredibly successful, and any expansion should be carefully designed to enhance, not burden, the system. We encourage the committee to ensure that any changes improve efficiency, sustainability, and financial viability for the businesses that make this program work.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I'm happy to answer any questions now or for your work session.