



CENTRAL DISTRIBUTORS, INC.

Maine's Leading Beverage Distributor

**Testimony in Opposition to
LD 2141**

**RE: An Act to Direct a Portion of Unclaimed Beverage Container Deposits...
February 4, 2026**

Good afternoon, Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources.

My name is Mike Barriault, and I am the President of Central Distributors in Lewiston and also Aroostook Beverage in Presque Isle. We are an independent Maine owned beverage distributor operated by my family since 1934. My sister, cousin and I represent the 4th generation of our family to continue the legacy of our company delivering beverages to Maine retailers throughout the state. We are a good company with good jobs and benefits for approximately 180 Maine people.

I am also here this morning representing our trade association comprised of other family owned and operated beverage distributors here in the state of Maine. We are the Maine Beverage Distributors Association. Collectively, we warehouse and deliver many popular beverages throughout the state, including Coors, Miller, and Budweiser brands, and local Maine breweries such as Maine Beer Company, Allagash, and Atlantic in Bar Harbor. Our wine portfolio includes wines from all regions of the United States and the world, and our non-alcohol offerings range from Poland Spring and Polar Beverages to teas, juices, and energy drinks.

For decades our distributorships have successfully operated the bottle bill since its inception in the 70s. Our trucks deliver full beverages to Maine retailers and pick up empty beverage containers on our way home.

We would like to make it very clear to you today that unclaimed deposits are an integral part of the economics of what helps us to make the bottle bill work. We have been before this committee on several occasions to try and demonstrate that our **COSTS** to operate the bottle bill **FAR EXCEED** any benefit from unclaimed deposits.

After accounting for all of these very real costs and fees, there is no money left in unclaimed reserves to pay for additional programs. Any additional fees would be new costs to distributors, manufacturers, and consumers of beverages.

Unclaimed deposits help us to offset the ever-increasing costs for redemption center handling fees, transportation and labor costs, and costs to recycle scrap material. Please

remember that the redemption handling fees alone are \$.06 per container (highest in the country), and we are now faced to share in new fees including \$600,000 to DEP, \$500,000 to support refillable programs, \$500,000 technology fund, and that is on top of any costs that will quickly mount to stand-up and operate the commingling cooperative.

We believe that while this bill may have great intentions, that it should not be funded by sources that are already dedicated and promised to the successful operation of the bottle bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions.