



Maine Beverage Distributors Association

February 4, 2026

An Act to Direct a Portion of Unclaimed Beverage Container Deposits to the Lake Water Quality Restoration and Protection Fund, the Maine Working Farmland Access and Protection Program.

Good afternoon, Sen. Tepler, Representative Doudera, and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee. My name is Cheryl Timberlake. I am a resident of Mt. Vernon. My government relations firm is Capitol Insights, and I serve as the Executive VP for the Maine Beverage Distributors Association (MBDA) and the Maine Beer Wine Commingling Group (MBWCG).

Here to testify in opposition to LD 2141, to the original bill and the sponsor's amendment.

MBWD was founded in 1933 as a non-profit organization that advocates on behalf of the Maine-based independent family-owned businesses licensed to distribute beer, wine and non-alcoholic beverages to Maine retailers, restaurants and our breweries/wineries that are licensed to sell those products to consumers.

Since 1978 with the passage of the bottle bill, MBDA's members have been tasked with building the infrastructure to pick up, process, and recycle returned containers. MBWCG was formed in 2003 to comply with the first commingling law for beverage distributors with like products.

Today, the modernization law, a Cooperative of commingling groups, is still in its infancy. The plan is being reviewed, the rules are being finalized, the Maine Beverage Recycling Group (MBRG) is established and focused on implementing the reform provisions; to reduce inefficiencies and costs with the goal of transitioning from beverage container sorting by brand to material type.

LD 2141 seeks to take necessary resources from the Cooperative to invest in other environmental areas before the current law is fully operational. Taking these unclaimed deposits for other purposes which we agree should be funded, undermines the trust built into the commingling initiative, which began more than 23 years ago.

The members of my Association are responsible by law for initiating the deposit on their containers, the collection of the empties at the retail and redemption center establishments and the further handling of the empties at their warehouses.

We recognize the role we play in ensuring that the deposit law works – but it is imperative for this Committee to appreciate the amount of financial resources the Distributors invest in terms of labor, transportation and warehouse space toward the success of the program. The summary of bottle bill costs is attached to my testimony.

Since the bottle bill took effect in 1978, beverage distributors have spent millions to ensure that the state has an efficient and effective recycling system. Unclaimed deposit money has been used by distributors to make the system operational. Warehouse space, trucks, forklifts and recycling equipment are examples of the capital expenditures made to manage the bottle deposit system.

If we review the statutory language for the bottle bill:

Chapter 38 §3101 Purpose

- 1. Legislative Findings.** The Legislature finds that beverage containers are a major source of nondegradable litter and solid waste in this State and that the collection and disposal of this litter and solid waste constitutes a great financial burden for the citizens of this State.
- 2. Intent.** It is the intent of the Legislature to create incentives for the manufacturers, distributors, dealers and consumers of beverage containers to reuse or recycle beverage containers thereby removing the blight on the landscape caused by the disposal of these containers on the highways and lands of the State and reducing the increasing costs of litter collection and municipal solid waste disposal.

Please notice the specific reference to “Incentives for distributors”. There is no distributor handling fee. We believe the use of the unclaimed deposits is a first step in assisting us in the offset of these costs.

Unclaimed Deposits under 38 M.R.S. §3108-A(1) will be used for: payment of the Department’s annual fee, administration of the cooperative, educational materials, requisite investments in reuse and technology, and, **as funds allow**, for operational costs including container pickups and payment to redemption centers.

The MBRG will use the unclaimed deposits to cover the \$1.6 million in fees/annual cost of the Cooperative and to offset the cost of the \$50 million in handling fees, if there are any funds available.

We oppose LD 2141 as it seeks to penalize local Maine business interests that are fulfilling their responsibilities under the law. Thank you for your consideration of our concerns and I would be happy to answer any questions.

Distributor Bottle Bill Costs by Category

MBWCG

Redemption

- Handling fees paid to redemption centers
- Handling fees paid to reverse vending machines
- Handling fees paid to others (bars, restaurants, etc.)
- Bags reimbursed to redemption centers

Delivery

- Delivery wages
- Delivery benefits, payroll taxes, workers compensation
- Delivery management & benefits
- Truck cost (lease cost, depreciation, etc.)
- Truck expenses (fuel, insurance, registration, etc.)
- Tolls
- Truck repair and maintenance
- Other misc delivery (pallet jacks, handtrucks, pallets, load bars, uniforms, ppe, etc.)

Warehouse

- Warehouse wages:
 - unload / load
 - sticker wine bottles
 - shell replenishment
 - housekeeping-custodial
- Warehouse benefits, payroll taxes, workers compensation
- Warehouse management
- Warehouse cost - Depreciation
- Warehouse expenses (utilities, etc.)
- Equipment cost (forklifts, etc.) Depreciation
- Equipment repair and maintenance
- Other misc warehouse (strapping tape, shrink wrap, ppe, etc.)

Administration

- Administrative wages
 - data processing
 - accounting
- Administrative benefits
- Administrative management (including human resource, finance, and executive management)
- Equipment cost (computers, devices, software licensing, telecommunication, service, etc.)
- Equipment expenses
- Equipment repair and maintenance
- Payment processing (invoices, postage, bank fees, check fees, etc.)
- Other misc administrative expenses (invoices, paper, toner, etc.)

Other

- Redemption center pickup charges (Maine Recycling, TOMRA etc.)
- Scrap recycling services (pickups / processing)
- Scrap recycling cost (glass, etc.)
- Scrap recycling income (aluminum, plastic, etc.)
- Scrap processing fees
- Membership cost to MBWCG
- Licensing fees to ME DEP
- Other misc costs (TOMRA fees, etc.)

Totals