



February 24, 2021

The Honorable Amy Sheldon
Chair
House Committee on Natural Resources, Fish, and Wildlife
115 State Street – Room EA
Montpelier, VT 05633

Testimony for H. 175

Dear Chair Sheldon and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Glass Packaging Institute (GPI), I am pleased to provide information relevant to H. 175, and to emphasize our ongoing efforts to use recycled glass as part of our members' manufacturing processes.

GPI is the North American trade association for the glass food and beverage manufacturing companies, glass recycling processors, raw material providers and other supply chain partners within the industry. GPI and its members work closely with local and state governments throughout the country on issues surrounding sustainability, recycling, packaging manufacturing and energy use.

In addition to serving as the President of GPI, I also serve on the leadership committee of the Glass Recycling Coalition (GRC), which includes other end-market industries who value recycled glass, and on the Boards of Glass Recycling Foundation (GRF) and The Recycling Partnership.

Glass Container Recycling Background

Glass is a core circular packaging material which is reusable, refillable and endlessly recyclable. Public sentiment strongly rates glass as one of the most supported materials in the recycling stream. The glass container manufacturing industry has a significant stake in the effectiveness of glass recycling programs. Recycled glass is a key component of the manufacturing process. For every 10% of recycled glass included in the manufacturing process, energy costs can be reduced 2-3 percent, with additional corresponding reductions in greenhouse gas emissions for every 10 percent recycled glass remelted to make new containers.

The glass container industry is serious about utilizing recycled glass as part of our manufacturing processes. The U.S. glass container industry purchases about 2.3 million tons of recycled glass each year and the average bottle or jar produced in the U.S. contains 1/3 recycled glass. The industry is studying policies and programs that will allow the country to achieve a national goal of a 50 percent

recycling rate by 2030, consistent with objectives set out by the United States Environmental Protection Agency this past year.

Quality and contamination are key differentiators to the value and potential end-markets for recycled glass. We estimate that nearly 60 percent of the glass cullet that makes it back to a container plant for reuse originates from the ten bottle bills states, which provide the highest volume of clean, source-separated glass. This separation drastically reduces contamination, increases the value, and provides the best opportunity to return the glass to a manufactured product.

Vermont's bottle bill program has high glass container recovery rates, is generally free of contaminants, and in high demand from the two primary end users, the container and fiberglass industries. The most current redemption rate numbers, north of 75%, highlight the importance of the program. Our industry values the quality recycled glass recovered from Vermont's bottle bill program.

Glass bottles redeemed through Vermont's bottle bill program are part of a critical supply chain in the manufacture of glass containers and fiberglass insulation throughout the Northeast. Importantly, these bottles avoid the fate and costs associated with landfill disposal. Curbside material that flows through many material recovery facilities can be recycled, but it is completely dependent on the capabilities of the facility receiving the material. Smaller particles generally less than 3/8th inch are referred to as "fines" in the industry and can be used for roadbed, mineral replacement or emerging products such as pozzolan.

H. 175's proposed increase in the deposit from 5 to 10 cents for all covered containers (with exception of spirits) is likely to increase the container return rates, as seen in Oregon most recently, and in Michigan, since that program's inception. While an increase in the deposit amount would likely result in a similar outcome for Vermont, we would encourage the Committee to consider the current fate of the unredeemed deposits, which since 2018 have been directed to support the Clean Water Fund. While that Fund is a worthy cause, it is also critical to reinvest in the financial stability/improved recovery aspects of the program itself. The impact of COVID-related redemption suspensions was felt in the supply of recycled glass available to industry and reinforces the need to bolster the redemption infrastructure to build a more resilient recovery system.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony highlighting the central role Vermont's bottle bill provides for quality and effective glass recycling.

Sincerely,



Scott DeFife
President