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March 31, 2021

Representative Janet Ancel, Chair
Vermont House Committee on Ways and Means
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633

Dear Chairwoman Ancel:

It was recently brought to my attention that Jen Duggan of the Conservation Law Foundation (CLF) has reached out to you with a seven-page “debunking” of an [op-ed I recently wrote](#).

Ms. Duggan is passionate about recycling. I believe she wants what we all want – more recyclable material put to a higher and better use.

She may even believe that H. 175 is a solution and not simply another tax on hardworking Vermonters. But she is attached to a solution that only made sense in the past. She has never run a recycling facility, she doesn't employ anyone in the recycling industry, she doesn't understand the economics of how a recycling facility works, and she absolutely doesn't understand the investments that have been made to recycle better in Vermont.

If she understood these realities, she would realize that cherry-picking national statistics and citing obtuse studies and poorly worded surveys actually has the opposite of her intended effect. All of the noise that she and others are introducing into the marketplace is eroding consumer confidence in recycling and leading to unintended consequences for Vermont's Universal Recycling Law – which has been an incredibly positive driver for a more sustainable state.

While I am tempted to take her approach and go point-by-point through her message, I think we can all agree that no one has the time or headspace to sift through her 3,000 words and various links – that if read in the proper context prove what I wrote to be accurate and her other points to be willfully ignorant of the realities in our home state.

With that in mind, here are the highpoints:

1. By removing expanded bottle bill material from curbside recycling, H. 175 will make it 11 percent more expensive for Vermont residents and businesses to adhere to Vermont's recycling mandate. It's a pretty simple economic reality, the removal of commodities that are sold at market value, without the removal of the same level of operating costs, results in an increased cost to the consumer.
2. H. 175 will move recycling from curbside to deposit programs and reduce disposal by at most 1 percent. The amount of time, effort, and cost to the consumer can be better spent for a more significant increase in other areas.
3. Referencing national statistics like “25% of cans are missorted at MRFs into bales of other commodities...” would mean that we are missing out on 25% of the revenue generated from the most valuable commodity passing through our MRFs and is absolutely laughable. We wouldn't be in business very long if that were the case.

4. CLF and VPIRG continue to try and conflate the issues faced by CSWD and their mishandling of glass with the realities at the Casella owned and operated MRF in Rutland. Let me be very clear: the glass that is processed by the MRF we own and operate in Rutland is cleaned, processed, and shipped by rail to North Carolina where it is turned into new bottles. We are able to do this because we have invested heavily in sorting and cleaning technology. This has nothing to do with what happened at CSWD. Creating new public policy because of one example of a poor decision is a recipe for bad policy making. Instead, we should be exploring ways to invest in better technology.
5. Ms. Duggan continues to push a narrative that somehow MRFs selling PET that creates durable goods is not as worthy an endeavor as selling PET to create new bottles and then turns around and extols the virtues of selling bottle bill glass to make fiberglass. The hypocrisy here should not be lost on anyone. We should seek to elevate the conversation away from what is the “best use” and seek to find ways for source reduction like reusable containers while opening discussions with Vermonters around the benefits of carbon sequestration through recycled PET park benches and textiles.

Over five decades I have seen our state flourish as a leader in recycling. At one time, the bottle bill had its usefulness. That usefulness has run its course and if anything, we should be discussing its abolition, not its expansion.

If we are to move recycling forward and continue to be in a leadership position, we need to consider a meaningful approach to things like multi-layer packaging, extended producer responsibility, and investing in infrastructure. We should not be trying to retrofit an old solution into new challenges.

In closing, I would like to mention that our doors are always open to any of you to come and see the realities of recycling in Vermont. Take five minutes and [watch this video](#) or better still, come to tour the MRF and meet with our recycling experts who understand the realities of the industry, and you will see for yourself that H. 175 makes no sense.

Respectfully submitted,
CASELLA WASTE SYSTEMS, INC.



John W. Casella
Chairman & CEO

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