



Senate Natural Resources & Energy
Casella Waste Systems, Inc.

April 22, 2022

H. 175 An Act related to Expanding the Bottle Bill

Thank you for the opportunity to provide additional testimony on H. 175. For the record, my name is Kim Crosby, I am the Director of Environmental Compliance for Casella Waste Systems.

Casella recognizes that there are many systemic issues with the current bottle bill system as it exists today that need to be addressed and we support fixing the current system to resolve these issues. However, to be clear, Casella does not support fixing these issues with the intent of expanding the bottle bill system. As stated previously, an expanded bottle bill would remove materials from the recycling stream that have a positive commodity value. To compensate for the loss, recycling facilities will increase the cost of recycling. In addition to the increase in the cost of recycling, the materials targeted by H. 175 are already being effectively recycled in current recycling programs and are often sold to the same end markets as the materials collected through the bottle bill system.

Issues with the current system have existed for decades and have been brought up during bottle bill stakeholder meetings and referenced during testimony last year before the House Natural Resources Committee. We commend this Committee for recognizing that there are issues with the system and not passing H. 175 as it came from the House.

While recognizing the issues is an important step in the right direction, fixing the issues will take time. We were able to listen to the discussion that took place on behalf of the working group that was appointed by this Committee however Casella, an industry that would be directly impacted by this legislation, was not allowed to actively participate in the discussion. We heard reference to some form of compensation to the MRF's by a proposed Producer Responsibility Organization, but it is unclear at this time what that compensation would be and if it would be adequate to not increase the cost of recycling for Vermonters. Based on the discussion of the workgroup, there appeared to be consensus on

some of the issues, however it appears that there are still issues that have not been resolved and a consensus could not be reached. For example, the group recognized the need for dedicated oversight of the redemption system, however there were many outstanding questions if a PRO is the right solution.

Casella and other recyclers in Vermont are an impacted industry and should have participated in the discussion. Regardless of our participation status, we believe that the discussion on how to fix the issues with the current bottle bill system and on how the recycling industry will be impacted needs to continue beyond this legislative session and should include stakeholders from all impacted industries.

Casella has made significant investments in Vermont's recycling infrastructure to help the State achieve its recycling and diversion goals. Any legislation that proposes to shift material away from our recycling facility jeopardizes existing and future investments. For example, page 21 of the latest version of the bill asks the Agency of Natural Resources to submit a written report on whether glass wine bottles should or should not be included in the redemption system. If Casella were to further invest in additional glass processing equipment to produce recycled glass that can be made into a construction material what would happen to those investments should the Agency recommend removing glass from the recycling system?

I would like to re-emphasize that Vermont needs local solutions for managing glass. There are no bottle-to-bottle facilities in Vermont. Glass has to be trucked or sent by rail several hundreds of miles away - this is true whether it is MRF glass, glass collected within the bottle bill system or glass collected separately at drop-offs. Glass can be broken, crushed, or pulverized and used for various types of construction materials including replacement for virgin sand in road construction projects. Casella and other recyclers have worked with the Agency of Transportation on the use of recycled glass in local road construction projects. In addition to VTRANS, Glavel, a facility that makes "foam glass" recently opened their facility in Essex. This could be another viable local option for managing recycled glass in Vermont. Supporting local uses

would reduce Vermont's carbon footprint and GHG emissions resulting in a far more sustainable option for managing this material.

Earlier in the session this committee visited a redemption center to see what that process entails. We respectfully request that before a decision is made to expand the bottle bill system, the Committee makes the same visit to one of the two recycling facilities in Vermont to gain a full understanding of the work that is done to separate, sort and process clean recycled bales.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today and I am happy to answer any questions.