

Good morning chairman Bray and members of the committee.

Thank you for inviting me to briefly speak today.

For the record, my name is Bob M. Montgomery. I'm on the management team at Hill Farmstead Brewery and Grassroots Distribution in Greensboro Bend. I have been with the company for almost ten years, involved in nearly all facets of the business, including the topic of today's hearing.

I'm speaking primarily for our brewery and wholesale distribution company, but also at the behest of the Vermont Brewers Association, as I'm a member of its Government Affairs Committee. The VBA is a nonprofit organization founded in 1995 to promote and strengthen the culture of craft brewing in Vermont.

Over the last few years, I've participated as a stakeholder in various bottle bill discussions with the Agency of Natural Resources. Given our unique position as manufacturers, distributors, and retailers of our own products, as well as those of other companies, we have a broad perspective on the system.

My previous testimony in February of 2021 to the House remains unchanged, nor does the VBA's position.

The VBA takes no official position on this bill, and while our membership is a significant economic driver in Vermont, its contribution to the container load in Vermont is ultimately minuscule as compared to other beverage segments.

As a brewery, in general terms, we support dramatic change and improvement of the system itself, and agree with the excellent analysis provided by Bree Deity. Now that we are able to do so safely here, we will continue to move our own fresh product back to refillable containers (often referred to as 'growlers') as much as we are able in the coming years, due to the challenges presented by aluminum use.

This version of H. 175 has a relatively narrow scope and, in spirit, neither we nor the association opposes the inclusion of more recyclable products to remove them from the waste stream.

Raising the commingling penalty is unlikely to impact small manufacturers like us, or sway us towards joining comingling, until such time that additional and/or simplified commingling options are available.

Thank you, committee members, for your time, and I appreciate the opportunity to speak during this hearing.