



August 27, 2021

**CCM Comments – Bottle Bill Modernization**

TO: Chris Nelson, Department of Energy and Environmental Protection

FROM: Donna Hamzy, Advocacy Manager, CCM

Response of CCM to *DEEP Notice of Proceeding, Scoping Meeting and An Opportunity for Public Comment, DEEP Implementation of Public Act 21-58: Bottle Bill Modernization.*

***Bottle Bill Stewardship Organization Approval & Draft Memorandum Agreement (MOA) for In-State Processing of Wine & Liquor Beverage Containers.***

CCM would like to begin by offering its thanks to Commissioner Katie Dykes and the entire staff at the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection for engaging municipalities in conversations within the Connecticut Coalition for Sustainable Materials Management (CCSMM) in 2020 with a focus on finding solutions to the State’s waste management crisis. Additionally, we want to extend our gratitude and appreciation to the Chairs and Ranking Members of the Environment Committee for including us in these conversations and working towards codifying long-term solutions.

CCM and its membership remain ready to continue to be at the table to discuss the implementation of Public Act 21-58 which seeks to modernize the Bottle Bill program in our state.

**OBJECTIVES/ STEWARDSHIP PLAN/ MOA**

CCM appreciates the opportunity to provide comments related to questions posed in DEEP’s opportunity for comments.

While CCM agrees with the “Tentative Objectives” outlined in DEEPs Notice, **CCM requests the addition of an objective directed at relieving municipalities from bearing the costly brunt of the current systems failures as an additional and critical objective of the Bottle Bill Modernization process.** The Department needs to make removing glass from municipal streams a priority.

CCM supports the expansions in Public Act 21-58 to the bottle deposit law in Connecticut, however, **CCM requests that the DEEP include wine and liquor bottles under such expansion. It is critical that as a state we seriously consider a source separated system for glass to not only alleviate costs to communities, but to also assist in reducing contamination to the stream.** By including glass in the bottle bill program, glass containers avoid the blue bins completely, are redeemable to the consumer, do not contaminate the municipal stream and result in glass that is ready to be recycled properly.

The Bottle Bill program is the cleanest, most efficient way to remove glass from the blue bins at municipal curbs. The wine and liquor industries need to be accountable for the end of life of the products they are putting into our stream and our environment. This responsibility is critical to the sustainability of our municipal streams and more importantly our municipal budgets. As local governments, we are not in the business of recycling and do not have the ability to control costs, thus cities and towns should not be held accountable for changes in the market. Municipalities can no longer sustain the market waves, while also being responsible for the cost of managing these glass bottles and containers.



**CCM requests that municipalities be included in discussions around the establishment of a stewardship plan as well as the formulation of the memorandum of agreement both outlined by Public Act 21-58.** Municipalities have been and are continuing to react to the changing markets because they have no choice – the current recycling practices are no longer sustainable and the Connecticut taxpayers deserve a system that doesn't result in an increase in property taxes because the system fails to react and innovate to a changing marketplace.

### **HOLISTIC SOLUTION OPTION**

The National League of Cities (NLC) has written on this issue extensively, and one of its recommendations for local governments is to, “Collaborate with your local economic development office to evaluate your current markets and identify new local and regional opportunities for unconventional or novel uses of your communities recycling commodities.” They even suggest that tax breaks and recycled materials minimums in procurement might help foster the creation of new markets. CCM believes fostering this type of economic development will provide solutions for the entire waste management system – MSW and recycling – and should be a critical component to managing this crisis. Supporting companies like Strategic Materials, Urban Mining, Quantum Biopower, Simple Recycling, etc., will not only add value to Connecticut's economy, it will encourage more market driven solutions.

One of NLC's case study cities is Austin, Texas, which has led the way in this type of adaptability. They created the Materials Marketplace, which is an “online platform that connects local individuals with businesses to divert, reuse and/or repurpose materials that are difficult or impossible to recycle or compost.” Giving new meaning to the phrase “one man's trash is another man's treasure,” Austin has found a way to once again turn certain recyclables into a profitable market, while at the same time benefitting local businesses and creating jobs. With ingenuity and market driven solutions like this, no one loses.

### **CLOSING**

Let's not allow perfection be the enemy of progress here. It is critical that we explore ways to establish new markets in the state as an economic development opportunity, and get serious about removing glass and organics from our stream. We must implement small, but significant changes to our current system now.

CCM encourages DEEP to support continued opportunities to include the municipal voice as Public Act 21-58 is implemented. Municipal budgets, as evidenced by the past few years, bear the brunt of the current system's failures, municipalities have a critical perspective required for holistic solutions. The priority should be to relieve Connecticut's towns and cities from the costly burden of a broken system.