



State of Connecticut
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE CAPITOL
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

REPRESENTATIVE GERALDO REYES, JR.
DEPUTY SPEAKER
CHAIR, BLACK & PUERTO RICAN CAUCUS
75TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
CAPITOL: (860) 240-8585
TOLL FREE: (800) 842-8267

COMMITTEES

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
LEGISLATIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

August 26, 2021

Re: *Bottle Bill Modernization*

Dear Commissioner Dykes and DEEP Staff,

Thank you for your attention and focus on implementing Public Act 21-58, An Act Concerning Solid Waste Management. As a long-time member of the Environment Committee, it was a significant accomplishment to finally see the legislature pass legislation modernizing the bottle bill.

I also currently serve as the Chair of the CT Black and Puerto Rican Caucus (BPRC) and fielded many questions and concerns from my caucus members about access to redemption services in the communities we serve. While supportive of the bottle bill's litter prevention program effectiveness, many members of the BPRC were very concerned that upgrading and expanding the program without increased redemption locations would adversely affect black and brown communities. As a result, I worked cooperatively with Senator Cohen to include the grant program outlined in Section 65 of June Special Session, Public Act 21-2, which provides funding grants for new redemption centers in currently underserved communities.

With that background in mind, DEEP's expeditious implementation of the grant program fulfills a promise I made to BPRC members to sufficiently address their justified concerns about access to redemption services. This is critically needed to ensure consumer equity and convenience in my district and many of my colleagues' districts. Modernization will disproportionately impact our communities without swift action to invest in new redemption centers that make redemption accessible within cities themselves. In many ways, the bottle bill modernization program depends on successful roll out of the grant program – especially in communities of color. It is imperative for the modernization that these new businesses be successful.

I urge DEEP to start the grant process as expeditiously as possible, working closely with grant applicants to ensure these new entities expand consumer access and provide our constituents with a convenient way to return cans and bottles and receive immediate return of customer deposits.

As you are aware, the expansion of return to retail was another important component of Public Act 21-58 with the inclusion of chain stores in Connecticut with greater than 7,500 sq. feet. By making this effective October 1, 2021, the legislature prioritized the need for expanded consumer access.

In keeping with this commitment, any stewardship model that is ultimately adopted must provide for compatibility of investments for these redemption centers, the expansion of return to retail and the other recycling investments that businesses in our state have made. In short, the modernization effort – including the new investments in redemption centers – must not be undermined by any stewardship model.

I look forward to seeing the full implementation of the law and the increased consumer access and convenience that Public Act 21-58 will provide.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Geraldo C. Reyes Jr." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'G'.

Geraldo Reyes Jr.