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October 1, 2025

**Testimony of David Boord, Legal Policy Intern
DC Appleseed Center for Law and Justice**

**Committee on Business and Economic Development:
Chairperson Kenyon McDuffie**

**B26-0058: Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Amendment Act
of 2025**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Amendment Act, the District's proposed Bottle Bill legislation. My name is David Boord. I am a Legal Policy Intern at the DC Appleseed Center for Law and Justice, and a third-year law student at the George Washington University Law School with a strong interest in environmental justice. DC Appleseed is a non-profit, non-partisan organization that aims to make the District a better place to live and work through advocacy, collaboration, coordination, and litigation. For nearly 30 years, DC Appleseed has worked to restore the Anacostia River. My testimony today will highlight the benefits of D.C.'s proposed Bottle Bill legislation by describing the District's litter problem and the negative economic impacts of litter, how the bottle bill supports the District's environmental targets laid out in its Zero Waste DC plan, and the success of bottle bill legislation in other jurisdictions. I urge this Committee to report favorably on the District Bottle Bill.

The District's Litter Problem and the Costs of Pollution

In 2008, the United States Environmental Protection Agency

designated the Anacostia River as “[impaired by trash](#).”¹ In 2023, the Anacostia Riverkeeper removed almost [5,000 pounds of beverage containers](#) from the Anacostia.² Beverage containers consistently account for [approximately half](#)³ of all litter cleaned up across the Anacostia watershed with plastic bottles *alone* [comprising 60%](#)⁴ by weight of all trash floating in the Anacostia.

The District’s litter problem presents economic implications. Bottle pollution [logs drainage systems](#),⁵ [increases flood risks](#),⁶ and [hurts tourism and outdoor recreation](#),⁷ which all impose costs on the District’s government and residents. The proposed legislation is designed to mitigate the District’s litter problem and these associated economic costs by redistributing responsibility among distributors and manufacturers to assist in managing the waste generated by the products that they sell and produce.

The proposed bottle bill also will help the District achieve its litter reduction goals, as laid out in its Zero Waste DC plan. In its Zero Waste plan, the District set the ambitious target of [diverting 80% of solid waste](#) away from landfills and incinerators.⁸ Initially, the District targeted 2032 as the

¹ “Decision Rationale Total Maximum Daily Loads For Biochemical Oxygen Demand and Nutrients Anacostia River Basin Watershed Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties Maryland and the District of Columbia,” U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (June 2008), p.3, online at

https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/Water/TMDL/DocLibAnacostia/Anacostia_BOD_DR.pdf.

² “Anacostia River Trash Mitigation Report 2023,” Anacostia Riverkeeper (2023), p.7, online at https://www.anacostiariverkeeper.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Trash-Report-2023_FINAL.pdf.

³ Anacostia River Trash Mitigation Report 2023,” Anacostia Riverkeeper, p.8.

⁴ Anacostia River Trash Mitigation Report 2023,” Anacostia Riverkeeper, p.10.

⁵ See Karen McVeigh, “Plastic waste puts millions of world’s poorest at higher risk from floods,” The Guardian (May 24, 2023) online at <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/may/24/plastic-waste-puts-millions-of-worlds-poorest-at-higher-risk-from-floods>.

⁶ “Plastic pollution and flood risk,” ResourceFutures (May 2023) online at https://uploads.guim.co.uk/2023/05/24/5797_Global_Impact_of_plastics_on_flooding_-_Summary_-_FINAL_-_Tearfund.pdf.

⁷ “The Economic Impacts of Marine Debris on Tourism-Dependent Communities,” National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (last updated Feb. 19, 2025) online at <https://marinedebris.noaa.gov/research/economic-impacts-marine-debris-tourism-dependent-communities>.

⁸ “Zero Waste DC Plan,” Zero Waste DC (February 2024), p.11, online at https://zerowaste.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/zerowaste/page_content/attachments/The%20Zero%20Waste%20DC%20Plan.pdf.

year for achieving its 80% waste diversion goal.⁹ The District, however, [recently pushed the target year back to 2040](#), following an analysis indicating that current rates for adoption, participation, and materials capture would not permit DC to meet its goals by 2032.¹⁰ As of 2022, the citywide waste diversion rate in the District was only [27.93%](#).¹¹ By improving beverage container redemption and recycling rates in the District, the bottle bill will support the District in achieving its 80% waste diversion target by 2040.

Success of Bottle Bill Legislation in Other Jurisdictions

Bottle bills have existed in the United States for over 50 years, with the first bill being implemented in [Oregon 53 years ago](#).¹² Today, a total of ten states have their own bottle bill legislation.¹³ There is overwhelming and clear positive evidence that bottle bill legislation works: states with bottle bills have [half as much soda and beer litter per capita](#) compared to non-bottle bill states.¹⁴ Furthermore, states with bottle bills have [30% fewer pieces of litter per capita](#) than non-bottle bill states.¹⁵

Moreover, bottle bill states that levy a 10-cent fee as opposed to a lower fee enjoy greater success on redemption and recycling rates. Connecticut and Oregon both updated their bottle bill legislation in recent years by increasing the deposit value from 5 cents to 10 cents. Connecticut's 10-cent fee went into [effect in 2024](#),¹⁶ and its redemption rate increased [from 44% in 2023 to](#)

⁹ "Zero Waste DC Plan," Zero Waste DC, p.5.

¹⁰ "Zero Waste DC Plan," Zero Waste DC, p.5.

¹¹ "District of Columbia Solid Waste Diversion Annual Report 2019-2022," DC Department of Public Works, p.7, online at https://dpw.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dpw/page_content/attachments/Solid%20Waste%20Diversion%20Report%202019-2022.pdf.

¹² "Oregon's Evolving Bottle Bill," Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, online at <https://www.oregon.gov/deq/recycling/pages/bottle-bill.aspx>.

¹³ "Bottle bill states and how they work," TOMRA (Sept. 2023), online at <https://www.tomra.com/reverse-vending/media-center/feature-articles/bottle-bill-states-and-how-they-work>.

¹⁴ "2020 National Litter Study Summary Report: May 2021," Keep America Beautiful (May 2021), p.23, online at https://kab.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Litter-Study-Summary-Report-May-2021_final_05172021.pdf.

¹⁵ "2020 National Litter Study Summary Report: May 2021," Keep America Beautiful, p.23.

¹⁶ "Bottle Bill Update," Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, online at https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/deep/reduce_reuse_recycle/bottles/bottle-bill-communication-122022-final.pdf.

[65% in 2024](#).¹⁷ Oregon increased its deposit fee to 10 cents in 2017, and its redemption rate increased [from 64% in 2016 to 81% in 2018](#).¹⁸ Today, Oregon has the [highest redemption rate \(87%\)](#) out of all bottle bill states, followed by Maine (74%), which imposes a 15-cent deposit fee on wine and liquor and a 5-cent fee on all other beverages, and Michigan (70%), which has a 10-cent deposit fee.¹⁹ Because the District’s proposed bottle bill legislation sets the initial deposit at 10 cents with the possibility of increasing it to 15 cents if necessary to change consumer behavior, the District’s bottle bill has incredible potential to help solve the Anacostia’s bottle litter problem and to reduce beverage container litter across the District.

Conclusion

By passing the Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Amendment Act, the D.C. Council has a wonderful opportunity to mitigate the negative impacts of litter and pollution on District residents. As such, this Committee should report favorably on the District’s bottle bill. Thank you for your time and attention. I am grateful for the chance to share my testimony and would be happy to answer any questions.

¹⁷ “Redemption Rates and Other Features of 10 U.S. State Beverage Container Deposit Programs,” Container Recycling Institute (Aug. 2025), online at https://www.bottlebill.org/images/Allstates/10_states_Redemption_Rates_080125.pdf.

¹⁸ “History of Oregon’s Bottle Bill,” Oregon Beverage Recycling Cooperative, online at <https://obrc.com/oregons-bottle-bill/history-of-oregons-bottle-bill/>.

¹⁹ “Redemption Rates and Other Features of 10 U.S. State Beverage Container Deposit Programs,” Container Recycling Institute.