

NYS Environmental Hearing 2024

Empire State Redemption Association's (ESRA) Written Testimony

Key Points:

- ESRA represents over 120 Redemption Centers across NYS; at the beginning of 2023, it was estimated that approximately 1,000 licensed and operating redemption centers were operating; now, at the beginning of 2024, an estimated 700 licensed redemption centers are operating.
- Strictly because the Handling fee for redemption centers has not been raised since 2009, hundreds of businesses have been forced to go out of business, and an estimated 1,000+ full-time and part-time jobs have been lost.
- This is not because Redemption Center owners are lousy business people; it must be made clear that Redemption Centers are failing because they are forced to work on a fixed margin of 3.5 cents per container.
- They are one of the few mom-and-pop businesses in America with revenues completely controlled and capped by NYS. When NYS does not increase handling fees in accordance with the cost of living, the government representatives of NY are consciously choosing to destroy green environmental jobs, put community-based businesses out of business, and incentivize the littering of our environment.
- I have some simple examples to help paint a clearer picture of why the handling fee must be increased.
- The minimum wage in 2009 was \$7.50; nearly 15 years later, in 2024, the minimum wage is around \$17, more than double! Plus, rent, energy, gas, and inflation have increased significantly since 2009.
- Consider this situation: NYS Senate members were paid approximately \$80,000 in 2009; today, in 2024, your salaries are over \$140,000!
- State Representatives deserved a raise, and minimum wage workers deserved a raise, and they got it. We must give them a raise to prevent redemption centers from going extinct, too.
- On behalf of over 120 Redemption Centers across NYS, we are asking for an emergency immediate increase in handling fee from 3.5 cents per container to at least 5 cents per container.
- Senate Bill - 6869 immediately helps save redemption centers with an increased handling fee. We are asking Debra Glick to make a critical amendment to Bill 7557, making it the same as Senate Bill 6869. Once the bill is "same-as," advocates from across the states can contact their local legislators and ask them to co-sponsor these life-saving bills.
- We are also asking the environmental chairs of the assembly and senate to finalize "same-as" Bills for the Bigger and Better Bottle Bill, which is necessary for the betterment of "canners," redemption centers, municipalities, the environment & NYS.