

Creek End Sustainability Solutions, LLC

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[Wamchair@nysassembly.gov](mailto:Wamchair@nysassembly.gov) and [financechair@nysenate.gov](mailto:financechair@nysenate.gov)

Re: In-person [Oral] Testimony; Creek End Sustainability Solutions, LLC

To the distinguished Chairs and members of the committees on environmental conservation, finance, and energy:

My name is Peter Baker, and I am a partner and operator of Creek End Sustainability Solutions, LLC which owns and operates a local community-based container redemption center in Hamburg, NY called Can Bottle Return, a national glass cullet recycling operation, and an international logistics brokering agency.

As a single operation, Can Bottle Return in Hamburg, NY helped divert over 45 million containers to initiators to be reused, and recycled in 2025 while providing 17 full time positions and creating an incubator for a donation/fundraising environment that exceeds \$150k per year – including processing containers at the Buffalo Bills stadium for any number of fundraising efforts. We can do as much because we believe in the spirit of innovation through investment; and most of our system is mechanized. My hope one day is that we at Can Bottle Return can be a part of diverting 150 million (plus) containers in the next 5-7 years. But with current margins, and no handling fee increases slated on the horizon, investment and modernization to get to that point is unfortunately unattainable.

As most of you are aware, local container redemption centers are currently operating at or near untenable margins in the year 2025/2026 because of the lack of handling fee increases since 2009. Exacerbated by the intense recent inflationary pressures and the new amounts of containers entering the stream that are not redeemable, the pressures to operate with the intent to profit, let alone innovate, are becoming too much to bear and has already caused 25% of the redemption centers across the state to close with many more scheduled to do so in 2026.

As more community redemption centers cease to operate, the State will continue to see an uptick in beverage containers not being reused and/or recycled, further intensifying the eco challenges the State already faces including:

- working against long- and short-term landfill objectives
- Plastic and aluminum as added pollution in natural environments like forests, green spaces, parks, waterways, streams, beaches, lakes, open spaces, streets, and the ocean

In turn, New Yorkers will have to fit the bill later with higher taxes for both public health and pollution.

As an operator on the front lines of this fight there are two very simple perspectives that should not be diametrically opposed as lawmakers, regulators, and operators. And that is **we can** continue to redeem, reuse, recycle in much larger quantities while developing a **circular economy** that at its core operates with the same

capitalistic principles and virtues that will no doubt develop long term prosperity through innovation, investment, education, and creative solutions to any challenge of the day.

Those that fear change want you all to believe that both truths cannot be held sincere at the same time, and that it can only be one or the other, further 'kicking-the-can' down the road for the New York taxpayer to figure out later and further dividing those in the fight. Any burgeoning industry just needs a little shove – which requires vision and courage. And as an operator in this fight, that is what I am asking for today:

The Vision to imagine a state redemption system fully equipped to manage the volume of containers of the day and of the future, and the courage to believe that what operators are looking for is not a handout, but instead something more. A **hand up** to be a part in helping shape the future of the circular economy in the Empire State.

Primarily, as a sustainability operator/consultant/investor, I find that the system that was once a leader in the nation is now blinking critically with a probable chance of collapse. The way forward is passage of the Glick Bottle Bill (**A6543/S5684**) as the ultimate solution, but like I have been taught throughout my career, sometimes the best way to eat the elephant is one bite at a time if the legislation continues to be detracted by those that don't want to see its passage.

As a rapid determination, use of the state budget to increase the handling fee as a redemption lifeline bill introduced by Assemblymember Ramos (A6267) and Senator Sepulveda (S5820a) should be introduced first as a measure to stabilize the system, and increase innovation while the other tenants of the Assemblymember Glick Bill are argued and finalized which could include future amended and edited handling fees.

2<sup>nd</sup>, it's long past time Lawmakers pass an updated version of the Beverage Container Law through the Bigger, Better, Bottle Bill considering contemporary packages, new beverages, added container types, and an updated deposit amount that incentivizes consumers to act after their beverage purchases.

Lastly, the redemption center industry has no real seat at the table, and our participation in the ECL Bottle Bill law needs to be statutorily protected as is outlined in the Ramos/Sepulveda bill. Example, handling fees need to be tied to general cost of living indexes and/or tied to minimum wage increases in the future. Secondly, a percentage of unredeemed funds should be considered for Innovation Investment Grants for Redemption Centers and Public Education Programs on the Law and programs managed through the DEC. Thirdly, redemption Centers should also be considered a separate subset industry of sanitation for the purposes of permitting, insurance, WC, UI, and general overhead administrative costs – all of which can be done during the permitting process.

I want to thank the Chairs and the distinguished members of this panel for their time and understanding. We can move a lot of what I proposed ahead of the bigger, better, bottle bill so that when the BBBB does become law, redemption centers across the state are both solvent and ready for the challenges of the day and the future.

Sincerely,



Peter J. Baker  
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