



Testimony for NY State Environmental Conservation budget hearing 1/28/26

Hello, my name is Alberto Rosero. I live in Brooklyn and I am a member of AIR-NYC, the Alliance of Independent Recyclers. Today, I represent all the members of AIR-NYC.

I am a recycler. I collect cans and bottles and redeem them for 5 cents each. I started doing this work 13 years ago. I had another job as a soccer referee. But in reality, it didn't pay enough to cover all of our expenses so I needed another way to make more money.

One day, I mentioned to my wife Rosa that I had seen someone outside collecting cans. And I said to her, my love, let's see if I can try this and see if it helps us out. We thought we'd try it for the sake of our youngest son, Jondel. At this time he was 7 years old. And we decided that we would collect and save the money we earned until he was older and we could give it to him. We started out just using the small plastic grocery bags from the supermarket, that's what we were collecting in. We would just earn 3, 4, 5 dollars at a time. We did this for a while, just a bit here and there. Slowly we became aware that if we really looked we'd find even more bottles and cans. We were able to get a shopping cart and we decided to go out and put all of our effort into collecting cans. And so it stopped being just about our young son; we realized it could be income for our whole family. We would do this work – collecting, sorting, redeeming, about 5 hours every day. We went all in and kept doing it and it helped us a lot financially. We started out by wanting to save for our small son and we kept that promise too. This past December my son, who is 20 years old now, asked about this money. I was able to give him hundreds of dollars; he was so happy and he hugged and thanked me. I believe that he will use it well to help him as he is starting his life.

This is my story. Redeeming cans and bottles, one nickel at a time, helped me buy food, to care for my children, and to pay my rent. I know many, many recyclers and their stories are very similar to mine. We are recyclers because this is a way that we can improve our lives. But redeeming cans and bottles also helps our city and our state. This is work that helps us conserve our environment.

As you make decisions on the state budget, the members of the Alliance of Independent Recyclers (AIR-NYC) ask that the Chair and the members of the Finance and Ways and Means committees take action on the New York State Bottle Bill.

You have the power to include an expansion of the Bottle Bill in the state budget. This expansion should include, at a minimum, an increase of the deposit from five to ten cents and an increase of the handling fee from three cents to five cents. For the Bottle Bill to be truly effective, it is also vital to expand the deposit to nearly all types of beverage containers. These expansions will give us cleaner streets and waterways, higher recycling rates, cost savings for cities, more money in the state budget from unredeemed deposits and an increase in earnings for workers like myself.

Passing the Expanded Bottle Bill is in line with NY State's role as an environmental and progressive model for the rest of the country.

Independent recyclers like myself are important to the success of the redemption program. We do the work that many consumers don't do. By collecting beverage cans and bottles that others throw away, we make sure that 100's of millions of recyclable items stay out of landfills. Help us do this work better for the sake of all New Yorkers and our environment.

Thank you for your time and attention.