



***Testimony to New York State Joint Legislative Budget Hearing
on Environmental Conservation***

Submitted by Kelli Timbrook, President,

New York State Association for Reduction, Reuse, and Recycling (NYSAR³)

January 29, 2019

Thank you for allowing NYSAR³ to submit written testimony addressing the Expanded Returnable Containers Act as stated in Governor Cuomo's 2019 budget, as well as the financial crisis for municipal recycling across the state. Drawing upon the decades of experience of our membership in the recycling industry, we would like to take this opportunity to share our insight and experience and help ensure the Committee is fully informed about the consequences – intended and unintended, beneficial and harmful – of the proposed expansion of the bottle bill. Our goal, one we believe we share with the Committee, is to protect the health and vigor of New York's recycling systems and infrastructure.

New York State Association for Reduction, Reuse and Recycling (NYSAR³) is comprised of public and private sector sustainable materials management individuals across New York, with a mission to provide statewide leadership on waste reduction, reuse and recycling issues and practices to improve the environment.

Recycling, as we know it, is in crisis.

The over-reliance on off-shore markets and now their closure is inflicting immediate and sustained financial harm to effective and critical recycling programs impacting communities along the Long Island Sound to the shores of Lake Erie. Merely maintaining existing funding levels for recycling and education is not enough for municipalities to ensure recycling continues during these abysmal market times. Why? Because these costs are so much higher than ever anticipated. Removing the high value material from the streams we manage will impact our ability to provide the capital and innovation to advance recycling for all and will drive the cost up to the consumer. For all counties across NY State, excluding New York City, the combined increased costs are estimated to be **more than \$42 million additional dollars. None of these costs are eligible for funding through the state's Environmental Protection Fund.**

NYSAR³ implores the New York State Legislature to please make sustaining recycling in New York a top priority by adding \$42 million to support municipal recycling in the FY 2019 budget in the wake of the recycling market recession.

NYSAR³ urges the NY State Legislature to help local communities reduce costs and increase recycling by expanding the Returnable Container Act (Bottle Bill) to include more glass containers, such as wine and spirits .



There is widespread support in NYS public and private recycling sectors for an expansion of the Bottle Bill to include wine and spirits. This is because wine and spirit containers are almost exclusively (~98%) glass. This glass, estimated at over 100,000 tons of material annually, is not easily recycled through curbside programs but can be recovered for markets, and support local jobs, if kept clean through the bottle bill program.

On the other hand, the proposal to include additional plastic and metal beverage containers in the bottle bill may increase recycling, but **will unfortunately drain desperately needed revenue from local recycling programs** at a time of severe financial stress as outlined above. Glass is highly abrasive and causes significant wear and tear on material recovery facility (MRF) sorting equipment. Glass can also negatively impact the value of other materials that are collected in the curbside mix, especially paper that is collected together with glass in single stream recycling programs. The negative value, high processing cost, and contamination of other materials, all make glass an expensive and undesirable material in residential recycling programs.

Expanding the Bottle Bill to include more plastic and metal beverage containers will cost local communities \$10 million.

In total, the plastic and metal non-alcoholic beverage containers which are proposed to be included in the Expanded Bottle Bill, represent an estimated **\$10 million per year in commodity value** statewide, including New York City. Redirecting this material into the deposit system will remove this revenue stream from New York State's curbside recycling programs at a time when it is most desperately needed by local municipal recycling programs. Any bill to expand the Returnable Container Act to include additional plastic and metal containers must **include compensation to local communities and Material Recovery Facilities for the loss in value** these plastic and metal materials provide.

In conclusion, we urge the New York State Legislature to make preserving our state's municipal recycling programs a budget priority for FY 2019 by:

- 1) **Providing direct financial relief of \$42 million to municipalities to address the unprecedented recycling market recession.**
- 2) **Expanding the bottle bill to include additional glass beverage containers, including wine, spirits, and hard cider bottles, which comprise over 100,000 tons of material annually.**
- 3) **Reimburse local recycling programs \$10 million if the Returnable Container Act is expanded to include the currently proposed plastic and metal beverage containers.**