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Written Testimony to the House Committee on Energy & the Environment on House Bill 3349

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Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance innovative, collaborative and equitable solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

Oregon Environmental Council opposes HB 3349.

Forty-six years after its passage, the bottle bill remains one of Oregon's most celebrated laws—continuing to elevate the state's image as a national leader for principled, pragmatic environmental policies. The bill is also an enduring source of pride for the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC), which played a key role in its passage.

The bottle bill has proved its worth over the years, resulting in beverage container return rates three times higher than in states without deposit laws. These high return rates result in substantial savings of natural resources and energy, particularly for aluminum cans. The bill has created hundreds of jobs handling, sanitizing, warehousing and trucking the bottles. And our state is more sanitary and beautiful due to less litter.

In 2011, the bottle bill was modernized to meet the challenges of today's society. The bottle bill now covers new types of containers that weren't around in 1971, and—because 5 cents does not have the same value today that it did in 1971—the deposit has been increased to 10 cents. These changes, being implemented over time, will increase return rates, reducing plastic bottle litter, and keeping many beverage containers out of the landfill.

These improvements to the bottle bill were the result of a compromise reached by all of the major stakeholders in HB 3145 of 2011. That compromise would be undermined by this session's HB 3349—an attempt to stall the bottle bill's progress. HB 3349 is a solution in search of a problem. There are an ever-increasing number of redemption centers and drop sites: the Oregon Beverage Recycling Association has indicated it's confident it will be able to handle the increase in volume. The other problem with HB 3349 is that it sends a signal of uncertainty to the business world; some manufacturers are already in the process of changing their labels on the products that will soon be added.

OEC urges you to leave the bottle bill alone and let the process unfold as the stakeholders agreed to. Thank you for your consideration.