



February 1, 2022

Senator Kate Lieber, Chair  
Members of the Senate Committee on Energy and Environment  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Lieber and Members of the Committee:

I write to express the Oregon Beverage Recycling Cooperative's (OBRC) support for provisions within SB 1520, which are focused on improving access to beverage container redemption services in Oregon. OBRC is a statewide not-for-profit stewardship cooperative that operates on behalf of the beverage industry to fulfill industry's operational role in Oregon's celebrated Bottle Bill.

We joined a broad Work Group of stakeholders and interested parties during the interim between the 2021 and 2022 Legislative Sessions to examine potential materials expansion in the Bottle Bill, in addition to considering options to enhance access and the redemption experience for people redeeming containers in Oregon. The Work Group closely resembled a Task Force designed in 2021 SB 847, which was responsive to an audit conducted by the Secretary of State's office in 2020, examining the Bottle Bill on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its 1971 passage. SB 1520 is the product of those Work Group discussions, and we thank the Legislators who convened the conversation and participated in the process.

The Oregon Bottle Bill is an example of Extended Producer Responsibility, where not only is industry responsible for the beverage containers it places in the marketplace, but it is operationally responsible to run a redemption program to retrieve the containers and pay their refund values to Oregonians. In 2009, the beverage industry formed OBRC to serve as a statewide operational steward, fulfilling this responsibility on behalf of beverage distributors who collectively represent the vast majority of beverages sold in the state.

While OBRC (and the BottleDrop network we operate) represents most beverages distributed in Oregon, there are geographic areas of the state where some beverage distributors have chosen not to participate in the stewardship cooperative. This means that we are unable to provide popular access points and redemption options in those areas, such as full service redemption centers and convenient bulk options like the Green and Blue Bag programs for individuals and nonprofits. The bag programs allow Oregonians to place glass, plastic, and metal beverage containers in the same bags and simply drop them

off at any of 84 (and growing) redemption locations across Oregon, with the containers being counted and credited to customer accounts within days of being dropped off.

It is not uncommon for us to field inquiries from legislators who hear from constituents in these areas, wondering why redemption centers and the Green and Blue Bag programs are not available nearby. While we don't believe distributors should be required to join a private cooperative, we do think that it is in the best interest of Oregonians for large distributors to provide the same range of services and redemption options for residents in the areas they operate, should they choose not to allow OBRC to provide those services and options on their behalf. SB 1520 closes a loophole that has previously allowed a small handful of distributors to have an outsized negative impact on consumer convenience in some areas, while hampering Oregon's container redemption and recycling rate outcomes.

SB 1520 also calls on a statewide cooperative to provide additional reporting to the Legislature each year regarding the previous year's expansion of access within the network, and expansion priorities in the year to come, including access for people who redeem containers on a daily or near daily basis. While there are many circumstances outside of our control when it comes to network expansion, we are happy to provide this additional detail for our legislative stakeholders, and eager to continue seeing consumer access grow within the BottleDrop network.

Oregon's system, the first of its kind in the nation, remains one of the most successful redemption programs in existence, with more beverage containers included in the program, and a higher redemption rate (routinely in the 80%-90% range), than comparable systems elsewhere in the United States -and even the world. SB 1520 would build on this success by expanding popular redemption options in areas that are not currently well-served, increasing consumer convenience, and boosting Oregon's impressive redemption rate even higher. We urge your support for this legislation.

Sincerely,

Eric Chambers  
External Relations Director  
Oregon Beverage Recycling Cooperative