



TESTIMONY SUBMITTED TO THE
JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES
MARCH 28, 2023

neither for nor against

LD 134 An Act to Increase the Handling Fee for Beverage Containers Reimbursed to Dealers & Redemption Centers
LD 972 Resolve, Directing the Department of Environmental Protection to Evaluate Strategies for Improving the Returnable Beverage Container Laws

Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich, and honorable members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee. My name is Liz Donohue, and I am the Director of Government Relations at BlueTriton Brands, owner of Maine's iconic Poland Spring® brand. We take tremendous pride in the Poland Spring brand, honor the dignity and hard work of our more 900 Maine employees, thoughtfully source our water locally and strive to be fiercely good to the communities we operate in.

BlueTriton Brands is an industry leader in packaging sustainability, and we welcome this opportunity to testify on LD 134 and LD 972. We have led our industry in source reduction initiatives, recyclability design, consumer education, and material innovations including the use of recycled content. We are committed to reducing our waste footprint, keeping plastic out of landfills, off beaches and hiking trails. In 2022, approximately 24% of our total portfolio was made from recycled plastic. This winter we rolled out 100% recycled plastic 700mL and 1L bottles – not an easy feat given the high demand for recycled plastic into downcycled items. We want to foster a strong circular economy where bottles are recycled directly into bottles and strive to raise the recycled content in our portfolio.

Maine's residents' recycling is key to that effort. Maine has long been a bottle bill leader with its residents recycling at high rates in contrast to other northeastern states. However, it comes with a high price and an outdated policy that has not leveraged the innovative technologies now available. For example, the Oregon Beverage Return Cooperative system has an 85% redemption rate at a price of 1.5 – 2 cents per bottle – that includes handling and pick up fees. In contrast, Maine's handling fee alone is 4.5 cents per bottle – the highest in the region and one of the highest in the nation.

BlueTriton Brands and the Poland Spring® brand team are committed to supporting a dynamic and efficient deposit return system that fosters consumer convenience, reduces costs, and prevents fraud. We do not support perpetuating an inefficient system that comes at a high cost to consumers for a low-cost item like a case of Poland Spring water.

We believe we are at a pivotal moment that offers us an opportunity to transform the current bottle deposit policy to ease the burden on redemption centers, cut costs, improve efficiency and customer convenience. BlueTriton supports the adoption of a smart and well-designed DRS policy that establishes a flexible system optimized to achieve high return and bottle to bottle recycling. To best serve Maine's residents, the deposit return system needs to be (1) performance-based, (2) customer-centered, (3) an inclusive circular system, (4) industry-led, and (5) transparent & accountable.

We are eager to work with the Committee to craft language to enable the circular economy and look forward to continuing our work in support of a smart and well-designed bottle redemption system.

