



August 23, 2024

Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery
CalRecycle
P.O. Box 4025
Sacramento, CA 95812

Testimony in Support of Increased Recycling of Empty Glass Beverage Containers Grant Program

Dear CalRecycle:

On behalf of the Glass Packaging Institute (GPI), I am pleased to provide **our strong support for the Recycling of Empty Glass Beverage Containers Grant Program.**

GPI is the North American trade association for the glass food and beverage manufacturing companies, glass recycling processors, raw material providers and other supply chain partners within the industry. GPI and its members work closely with local and state governments throughout the country on issues surrounding sustainability, recycling, packaging manufacturing and energy use.

Recycling of Empty Glass Beverage Containers Grant Program

Quality and contamination are key differentiators to the value and potential end-markets for recycled glass. **We estimate that nearly 60 percent of the glass cullet that makes it back to a container plant for reuse originates from the ten bottle bills states, which provide the highest volume of clean, source-separated glass.** This separation drastically reduces contamination, increases the value, and provides the best opportunity to return the glass to a manufactured product.

With expansion of the California container deposit program to include wine and spirits, the program now covers the vast majority of the beverage products sold in glass, however comprehensive infrastructure is lacking to move additional glass into cleaner, non-commingled streams.

Importantly, bottles covered in the container deposit program avoid the fate and costs associated with MRF processing and landfill disposal. Curbside material that flows through many material recovery facilities *can* be recycled, but it remain

completely dependent on the capabilities of the facility receiving the material, which can lower the glass yield in many instances. Smaller particles generally less than 3/8th inch are referred to as “fines” in the industry and can be used for roadbed, aggregate, mineral replacement or for emerging products, such as pozzolan.

The benefit of the container deposit redemption system are dedicated separate recovery streams, which preserve the potential highest and best use for glass.

As more glass is included in the deposit stream, sorting challenges are also reduced for other commodities in the commingled recycling stream, such as paper and fiber, increasing their yields and reducing the amount of recyclable material being discarded in landfills at the end of the sorting lines.

Prior to expansion of the container deposit program to cover wine and spirits, we found many hospitality venues had little or no formal program for recovery of glass bottles consumed on-premise. Often, hotels and other food and beverage retailers would allow staff to collect and redeem long covered containers (beer, soda and similar), in place of a purposeful redemption program at their establishments.

The addition of larger wine and spirits containers to the program may incentivize more bars, restaurants and hospitality venues to take another look at a more formal container recovery program, and this grant can speed development of those container recovery systems.

Data from pilot projects that GPI knows of, or participates in, show it is possible to recover as much as two tons of glass containers from average sized bars and restaurants every month, and as much as 5 tons of material from hotels and hospitality venues every month.

GPI research also shows that bar, restaurant and hospitality venues can account for 15-30 percent of the glass containers in the consumer marketplace, given the high prevalence for beverage alcohol producers to use glass bottles to package their products. In an average state, GPI estimates that 20 percent of beverage packages used and disposed of come from the hospitality sector, and a majority of those product lines are connected to glass containers.

GPI recommends that consideration is provided to the widest range of hospitality related business, including catering and resorts, with beverage alcohol licenses, in order to maximize glass recovery by grant recipients under the program.

GPI also recommends clear instructions and points within the criteria for judging grant applications, and that they consider accounting of tons collected and diverted

from the waste recovery stream, as well as an indication of the types of end-markets that will ultimately utilize the recycled content generated by applicants, in order to reward projects supporting the circular economy of glass in California.

The Recycling of Empty Glass Beverage Containers Grant Program will modernize and strengthen the current program. By encouraging restaurants, on-premise and on-sale retail licensed establishments to recycle spirits, wine and other beverage types, the overall recycling rates would be bolstered, and the recyclable quality of the containers recovered would be increased.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony highlighting the central role that the California grant program provides for quality and effective glass recycling. We look forward to continuing our support for CalRecycle's glass beverage container glass grant program, and remain committed to working with all stakeholders to enhance glass recovery and recycling in the state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott DeFife". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

Scott DeFife
President