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**TESTIMONY RE: SB 661, 662, and HB 5474
JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT
PUBLIC HEARING
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Good morning Senators Meyer and McKinney, Representatives Roy and Chapin, members of the Environment Committee, I am Brian Flaherty, Director of Public Affairs at Nestlé Waters North America, and I am here to testify on three bills before you that seek to expand recycling in our state.

Nestlé Waters is a Connecticut company that employs 450 people at our North American headquarters in Greenwich and branch delivery facilities in North Haven and Bozrah.

70 percent of what Americans drink comes in a container, and bottled water has the lightest environmental footprint of them all—using less water and less plastic to produce than any other. The greatest impact that a beverage manufacturer can have is in the design and production of our products. My company has done just about everything we can do as a manufacturer to reduce our environmental footprint.

In the last 15 years, we have reduced plastic content in our packaging by 40%, and our Eco-Shape bottle is the lightest branded half-liter PET plastic beverage bottle in the U.S. This year, we will reduce the plastic by another 15%, and cut the plastic in our 20-oz. and one liter bottles by 20%.

Our Home and Office Division is the largest returnable bottled beverage company in America. Our 3- and 5-gallon containers are each reused about 35 times, and then they're all recycled.

Recycling is the right thing to do for all household products that come in the very same plastic, glass and aluminum that my company's containers do. Yet rates are low across the country. Connecticut needs a robust infrastructure and motivated citizens to make it work across the board. That is why Nestlé Waters worked with our industry partners to help form the National Recycling Partnership, which will soon complete its year-long "Model City" recycling pilot program here in the city of Hartford. It is also why we support the expansion of recycling in this state such as in House Bill 5474.

Beverage container recycling rates need to grow, as well. Today, 100% of Nestlé Waters' bottles are recyclable, and water bottles are now the most recycled container in curbside programs in the U.S., according to a recent study by the National Association for PET Container Resources (NAPCOR).

Last October, we set a 10-year goal of reaching a 60% recycling rate or better for PET beverage bottles by 2018. We are already working with our beverage partners, recycling stakeholders and environmental groups to reach that goal. Clearly, we'll never get there without an effective beverage recycling program.

Senate Bills 661 and 662 would expand Connecticut's "bottle bill," enacted in 1978, to products such as bottled water. Supporters of Connecticut's bottle deposit law often make the point that there are products that exist today that didn't when Connecticut's bottle bill was enacted 31 years ago. They're right. But the current bottle bill doesn't recognize the way Connecticut recycles in the 21st Century.

Nestlé Waters is not against bottle bills. Putting an incentive on a beverage container will make it more likely to get recycled. We simply oppose perpetuating a bottle recycling system that operates as if Connecticut's municipal recycling system doesn't exist.

Stated simply: Rather than just expand, Connecticut's bottle bill needs to evolve.

It would be a lost opportunity if the legislature simply expanded the state's existing bottle deposit law without considering how renovating it can actually improve our environment.

You will hear from our retail customers how recycling programs that depend solely on store take-backs are limited to available space. Since it would be impractical to send containers from shampoo to salad dressing and detergent containers back through retail stores, we believe the legislature should modernize the bottle bill to help support the comprehensive recycling programs that we all want to capture those other household goods.

If Connecticut's bottle bill is going to be expanded, it needs to be modernized in a way that supports municipal recycling and provides flexible return options that are convenient for consumers and not a burden on retailers. This can be done, and we are here to help you build, support, and pass such a model.

We stand ready to work with this committee, the Governor and legislative leadership to find a way forward and update the 31 year-old bottle bill, so that it boosts bottled water recycling, controls costs, and provides a funding stream for municipal recycling.

Thank you.