

BILL018(25)

Testimony

MISC. COMM. 123

HOUSING, SUSTAINABILITY, ECONOMY & HEALTH (HSEH)

**HOUSING, SUSTAINABILITY, ECONOMY & HEALTH
(HSEH) Meeting**

Meeting Date: Mar 4, 2025 @ 01:00 PM

Support: 3

Oppose: 3

I wish to comment: 0

Name: James Gauer	Email: jamesjtz@aol.com	Zip: 96818
Representing: Self	Position: Support	Submitted: Feb 26, 2025 @ 04:05 PM
Testimony: City leaders must lead the way in protecting our environment, and this step in removing single use plastics <1 L from city facilities is a tangible impact that may ripple effect across agencies and the public perception. In the absence of these drinks, I suggest partnering with local food and beverage companies to replace this vacuum, or consumer demand for these drinks will be difficult to swallow, so to speak.		
Name: Rebecca Soon	Email: rebecca.ji.soon@gmail.com	Zip: 96817
Representing: Self	Position: Support	Submitted: Feb 28, 2025 @ 04:09 PM
Name: Lauren Zirbel	Email: LaurenZirbel@HawaiiFood.com	Zip: 96813
Representing: Hawaii Food Industry Association (HFIA)	Position: Oppose	Submitted: Mar 3, 2025 @ 01:45 PM
Name: David Thorp	Email: dthorp@americanbeverage.org	Zip: 20036
Representing: American Beverage Association	Position: Oppose	Submitted: Mar 3, 2025 @ 02:55 PM
Name: Victor Lim	Email: victor.lim@partners.mcd.com	Zip: 96813
Representing: Hawaii Restaurant Association	Position: Oppose	Submitted: Mar 4, 2025 @ 08:23 AM
Name: Angela Melody Young	Email: Alohadininedesign@gmail.com	Zip: 96817
Representing: CARES Community Advocacy Research Education Services	Position: Support	Submitted: Mar 4, 2025 @ 12:58 PM
Testimony: Testifying to comment		

Rebecca J. 'I. Soon
680 Iwilei Road, Suite 600
Honolulu, HI 96817

March 4, 2025

Committee on Housing, Sustainability, Economy, and Health
Chair Matthew Weyer
Vice Chair Radiant Cordero

RE: **BILL 18 (2025) - Relating to Plastic**

Aloha nui e Chair Weyer and Members of the Committee on Housing, Sustainability, Economy and Health:

I am writing in **support** of Bill 18, which is a crucial step to address the plastic pollution impacting our oceans and 'āina.

Our reliance on single-use plastic bottles continues to be problematic and contributes to a variety of adverse environmental, economic, energy-related, and human health-related impacts. We have known for some time that this modern-day convenience releases harmful chemicals during its production, use, and incineration process, with microplastic pollution easily harming our water, farmlands, wildlife, and ourselves.

Reducing the volume of solid waste that is sent to local landfills is also critical for Honolulu, especially in a time where we face challenging questions about the future of our waste stream. Cities and states that have adopted similar bans have seen significant reductions in plastic waste, proving that this shift is both feasible and impactful.

While the concerns from the bottling industry are important - the footprint that this particular measure takes is a small fraction of the overall industry. It is important that Honolulu lead by example and help to propel forward solutions, and hopefully can move forward in the future.

I hope you will consider supporting Bill 18. While this is not a new issue, this is an opportunity for Honolulu to lead and live to its values of protecting our environment and public health for residents and future generations. Every step we take brings us closer to our goals.

Mahalo,



Rebecca J. 'I. Soon
rebecca.ji.soon@gmail.com



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Paul Kosasa, ABC Stores, *Advisor*
Toby Taniguchi, KTA Superstores, *Advisor*
Joe Carter, Coca-Cola Bottling of Hawaii, Odom, *Advisor*
Eddie Asato, Pint Size Hawaii, *Advisor*
Gary Okimoto, Safeway, *Immediate Past Chair*

Written Testimony of

Lauren Zirbel, President, Hawai'i Food Industry Association (HFIA)

Before the Committee on Housing Sustainability Economy and Health Opposition to Bill 18 Relating to Plastic March 4, 2025

Chair Weyer and members of the Committee thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to Bill 18 – relating to plastic bottles.

My name is Lauren Zirbel, and I am the President of the Hawai'i Food Industry Association (HFIA), which represents more than 200 member companies, including grocery stores, food manufacturers, distributors, and others in the food supply chain here in Hawai'i.

Advancing a Circular Economy for Plastics in Hawai'i

Hawai'i is on the verge of a significant milestone in sustainability with the anticipated opening of a PET reprocessing facility next year. This facility will play a pivotal role in creating a circular economy for plastics by reprocessing PET bottles into new bottles, reducing reliance on imported materials, and keeping plastic waste out of landfills.

This initiative demonstrates the state's commitment to innovation and environmental stewardship. It will help ensure that Hawai'i remains at the forefront of sustainable solutions for plastic recycling while fostering local jobs and reducing the carbon footprint associated with exporting recyclable materials.

Hawai'i's Beverage Industry: Local Jobs and Sustainability

The beverage industry is a critical part of Hawai'i's economy, employing more than 1,200 local workers and supporting thousands more in businesses such as grocery stores, restaurants, and theaters. Unlike many consumer goods, Hawai'i's beverage companies produce and distribute their products locally, using bottles made from polyethylene terephthalate (PET)—a lightweight, durable plastic that is 100% recyclable and designed to be remade.



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PET bottles are collected and recycled through the state's HI-5 program, which incentivizes consumers to return bottles for recycling. This ensures PET bottles are diverted from landfills and reintroduced into the circular economy, further reducing waste and environmental impact.

Addressing Misconceptions About PET Plastic Bottles

There is often misinformation surrounding PET bottles and their impact on the environment. It's important to set the record straight:

1. **Not Single-Use:** PET bottles are not single-use plastics. They are designed to be recycled and remade into new bottles or other products.
2. **Minimal Waste Contribution:** PET bottles make up only 1% of municipal solid waste in the United States, while other plastics account for significantly more.
3. **High Demand for Recycled PET:** Recycled PET is a valuable commodity used to produce new bottles and other products, reducing the need for virgin plastic.
4. **Consumer Education:** Beverage companies are leading efforts to educate consumers on recycling through programs such as labeling bottles with clear instructions like "Recycle bottle...with cap on."
5. **Collaborative Solutions:** The beverage industry is actively working with environmental groups and government agencies to develop effective policies for reducing plastic waste and increasing recycling rates.

Why Bill 18 is Counterproductive

Passing Bill 18, would undermine the significant investments already made to establish a circular economy for plastics in Hawai'i. This bill would send a message that Hawai'i is unwilling to support initiatives that align with sustainable practices, making it difficult to attract future funding for innovative recycling solutions in the state.

The upcoming PET reprocessing facility represents a significant step toward reducing Hawai'i's plastic footprint and ensuring that our state is a leader in sustainability. Banning products after such investments have been made to reuse these materials would create uncertainty for future projects and discourage progress toward long-term solutions.

A Collaborative Path Forward



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HFIA supports sustainable solutions that balance environmental protection with economic sustainability. We urge the council to allow the PET reprocessing facility to demonstrate its impact and to work collaboratively with stakeholders to build on this progress. Together, we can create a more sustainable future for Hawai'i.

Thank you for considering our testimony.



**Written Testimony of
David Thorp, American Beverage Association
Before the Honolulu City Council
Committee on Housing, Sustainability, Economy & Health
Opposition of Bill 18: Relating to Plastic**

Good afternoon, Chair Weyer and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to comment in opposition of Bill 18 – relating to plastic bottles.

I am David Thorp, Vice President, State Government Affairs West for the American Beverage Association (ABA). The American Beverage Association is the trade association representing the non-alcoholic beverage industry across the country and here in Hawaii.

Beverage industry's local impact on Hawaii's economy

The beverage industry is an important part of Hawaii's economy – and one of the few remaining industries still manufacturing on the Islands. Unlike most consumer products, many of our beverages, aluminum cans and plastic bottles are manufactured and distributed in Hawaii by local workers.

Non-alcoholic beverage companies in Hawaii provide 1,200 good-paying jobs across the state. The industry helps to support thousands more workers in businesses that rely in part on beverage sales for their livelihoods and, such as grocery stores, restaurants and theaters.

Hawaii beverage companies are taking bold actions to reduce their use of new plastic and make sure their bottles do not end up in nature or wasted in landfills. We are carefully designing our bottles to be 100% recyclable, even the caps.

What is PET?

Our bottles are made of a specific type of plastic - polyethylene terephthalate or PET, a durable lightweight plastic that is the most recyclable and recycled plastic in the country. Unlike other types of plastic, PET is NOT single use but is made to be remade. That's why America's beverage companies use it for beverage bottles.

Setting the record straight about plastic bottles in the environment

There's a lot of misinformation about the value of our fully recyclable plastic bottles. Here are things you may not know.

1. PET beverage containers are collected and recycled under the state's HI-5 program and Honolulu's curbside recycling program. The state and city recognize that these bottles are valuable and much different from other plastics that have no value because they are not recyclable. The state places a deposit on our bottles because it wants to encourage consumers to bring them back and be remade into new bottles as intended.

2. Our recycled bottles are valuable and in high demand. Recycled PET can be used to make new bottles and is also highly sought after by producers of other products to reduce their use of new plastic.
3. Our bottles comprise only 1% of municipal solid waste in the U.S., according to an analysis of U.S. EPA data. Other plastics make up more than 10 times that.
4. The recycling rate nationwide for ALL plastics is below 9%. However, valuable PET which is not single use is collected by the city and state resulting in a 49% recycling rate.
5. Our industry is leading to educate consumers on the value of our plastic bottles. That's why we are placing a uniform message on bottle caps, so consumers understand that our bottles are fully recyclable: *"Recycle bottle...with cap on."*
6. Beverage companies are reducing their plastic footprint. We're now making plastic bottles from 100% recycled plastic and we're using more recycled plastic than ever before. The industry's plastic footprint declined 7.7%, the amount of recycled plastic in our bottles nearly tripled over four years, and nearly two out of three bottles included recycled plastic in 2022.
7. We are working with environmental groups, such as the World Wildlife Fund, to advocate for modern collection policies that have worked elsewhere to raise recycling rates and keep plastic out of nature.
8. It takes energy to make any bottle or can. PET produces significantly fewer greenhouse gas emissions, thanks to its lightweight properties, and it requires lower energy for production than other containers.
9. Banning lightweight, locally produced PET water bottles will require providing the alternative of aluminum cans full of water that must be shipped thousands of miles. The results will be dramatic cost increases for consumers and increased greenhouse gas emissions from shipping.
10. Beginning later this year, recycled PET beverage containers in Hawaii will stay in the state. A new facility will turn recycled plastic bottles into new bottles, creating a truly circular economy. Recycled aluminum cans will need to be shipped thousands of miles to then be shipped back thousands more miles.

Our commitments are meant to serve as a catalyst for other industries to do more to reduce our plastic footprint. We are eager to work with those who share the goal of using less new plastic. Government and industry should come together to develop new, innovative ideas that will help us use less new plastic and ensure our bottles and caps don't wind up in places they shouldn't.

Sincerely,

David Thorp

American Beverage Association, Vice President, State Government Affairs West

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Victor Lim, Government Relations Lead – McDonald's | **Mail: 2909 Wai'ala'e Avenue #22, Honolulu, HI 96826**

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Date: March 4, 2025

To: CM Matt Weyer, Chair
CM Radiant Cordero, Vice Chair,
Committee on Housing, Sustainability, Economy & Health
Honolulu City Council

From: Victor Lim
Legislative Lead

Subj: Bill 18 (2025) Relating to Plastics Bottles

Thae Hawaii Restaurant Association representing 4,000 Eating and Drinking places here stand opposed to Bill 18 (2025) that will ban the use of plastic bottles in the City's vending machines.

Both aluminum cans and plastic bottles are currently used in our vending machines and are being recycled by our state's HI-5 recycling program. The plastics bottles are also reusable after the beverage content has been consumed, less expensive, and also probable less carbon footprint. With the current talk of tariffs, the aluminum cans will also start to cost more. It is our understanding that a recycling facility is about to come online on the neighbor island this year that will be able to turn the captured used plastics into new water bottles.

Thank you for giving us this opportunity to shar our view.

