

BILL018(25)

Testimony

MISC. COMM. 196

HOUSING, SUSTAINABILITY, ECONOMY & HEALTH (HSEH)

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

Meeting Date: Apr 1, 2025 @ 01:00 PM

Support: 0

Oppose: 1

I wish to comment: 1

Name: David Thorp	Email: dthorp@americanbeverage.org	Zip: 20004
Representing: American Beverage Association	Position: Oppose	Submitted: Mar 31, 2025 @ 10:09 AM
Name: Gavan Abe	Email: gabe@dhs.hawaii.gov	Zip: 96817
Representing: Department of Human Services, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Services for the Blind Branch	Position: I wish to comment	Submitted: Apr 1, 2025 @ 10:26 AM



**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
April 1, 2025**

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,

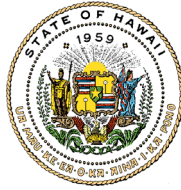
David Thorp

American Beverage Association, Vice President, State Government Affairs West

202-841-2646

dthorp@americanbeverage.org

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



RYAN I. YAMANE
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWE LAWE KANAKA
Office of the Director
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

TRISTA SPEER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

April 1, 2025

TO: The Honorable Councilman Matt Weyer, Chair
Honolulu City Council Committee on Housing, Sustainability and Health

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director
Gavan Abe, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

SUBJECT: **BILL 018 (25) – RELATING TO PLASTIC**
Council Meeting: April 1, 2025, 1:00pm, City Council Chamber

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) appreciates the intent of the bill and the updated exemption for Licensed Blind Vendors in City & County of Honolulu locations.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this measure is that no single-use plastic bottle having a capacity of 1 liter or less may be sold or offered for sale at any vending machine located at a city facility after December 31, 2025. Any contracts in effect prior to the enactment of this ordinance may be fulfilled and any subsequent contract renewals must be executed in compliance with this ordinance.

The Licensed Blind Vendor (LBV) program, also known as the Randolph-Sheppard Act program, is one of the most successful entrepreneurial programs for legally blind individuals in the State of Hawaii and nationally. The blind vending program offers blind people a chance at self-determination, self-sufficiency, pride, and financial independence. Ho`opono, the Services for the Blind Branch of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Department of Human Services, is the State Licensing Agency that is responsible for the licensing and oversight of the LBV

program in Hawaii. Attached to the program is the Randolph-Sheppard Revolving Account (RSRA), authorized by section 347-12.5, HRS. There are LBV facilities and vending machines located in numerous City and County of Honolulu buildings that operate under permits, which include the sale of beverages in plastic bottles.

The RSRA is used to benefit blind vendors in the manner of retirement, health insurance, new and replacement equipment, training, and other costs related to the blind vending program. One of the vital costs that is regularly paid by the RSRA is for the purchase of initial inventory to support the success of blind vendors in new and refurbished facilities. Beverages, bottled and canned, constitute approximately 50% of initial inventory. Beverages are the blind vendors' best sellers and constitute a majority of the blind vendors' sales and income. The profits from beverage sales pay for everyday personal expenses of the LBV, such as rent, food, and transportation, i.e., everything necessary to live an independent life, be taxpaying citizens, and become less reliant on public assistance.

We appreciate our previous request for an exemption to this proposed ordinance to allow Licensed Blind Vendors in City & County of Honolulu locations to continue to operate according to our existing permit terms in City facilities.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this bill.