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AMERIPEN
American Institute for Packaging and the Environment

Testimony
General Comments on
Senate Bill 939

EXTENDED PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY FOR PACKAGING AND PAPER ACT

Senate Environment and Agriculture Committee
April 30, 2025

Chair Sosnowski, Vice Chair Britto and Members of the Senate Environment and Agriculture Committee.

AMERIPEN – the American Institute for Packaging and the Environment – appreciates the opportunity to submit written testimony on Senate bill 939 that would create an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) program for packaging and paper products. AMERIPEN has strong principles (see attached) for effective packaging EPR and financing programs to improve recycling and has been a leading voice on EPR proposals and laws across the country. While we understand the desire to move forward with EPR in SB 939, and also consideration of a bottle bill, we encourage further stakeholder engagement around the right approach for Rhode Island.

AMERIPEN is a trade association dedicated to improving packaging and the environment. We are the only material-inclusive packaging industry trade association in the United States representing the entire packaging supply chain. This includes materials suppliers, packaging manufacturers, consumer packaged goods companies, and end-of-life materials managers. Our membership also includes a robust array of industry, material, and product-specific trade associations who are essential to the AMERIPEN fabric. We focus on science and data to support our public policy positions, and our advocacy and policy engagement is based on rigorous research rooted in our commitment to achieve sustainable packaging policies. We have several member companies that manufacture packaging components in Rhode Island, and many more who import packaging materials and products into the State. The packaging industry supports more than 5000 jobs and accounts for more than \$1.3-billion in total economic output in Rhode Island.

AMERIPEN acknowledges that EPR programs can be a useful policy mechanism to help achieve environmental goals and reduce waste by bolstering recycling programs. The packaging industry understands the value of properly designed EPR programs and their potential to improve the recycling system. However, given recent discussions around a bottle bill and the report from the *Special Joint Legislative Commission to Study and Provide Recommendations to Protect our Environment and Natural Resources from Plastic Bottle Waste* - we believe a broader engagement of stakeholders is needed around the right set of recycling policies for Rhode Island. Should EPR be considered, a similar evaluation of the benefits and unique aspects of the State, with all stakeholders would be needed to support a packaging and paper EPR program in Rhode Island. Additionally, performance of a Needs Assessment or a study of current recycling rates and performance data would be helpful to inform a proper approach that would improve recycling. AMERIPEN has participated in these types of extensive dialogues that have occurred in states like Minnesota, Maryland, Illinois and Washington that have led to the performance of Needs Assessments and recycling studies that have or are leading to more informed policy creation. These studies have identified the current capacity, infrastructure and challenges that exist in each state and have served as a useful tool in looking at recycling policy and EPR.

We hope that our comments are constructive the General Assembly might consider an additional Commission to specifically look at EPR or a needs assessment as the basis for what specific characteristics of Rhode Island's recycling system need to be considered, before putting a program in place. We look forward to continuing discussion with the Committee on this important topic. Please feel free to contact Andrew Hackman, with Serlin Haley LLP at ahackman@serlinhaley.com with any questions regarding AMERIPEN's position on this important issue.