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**JOINT LEGISLATIVE PUBLIC HEARING
ON 2023-2024 EXECUTIVE BUDGET PROPOSAL
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION
TESTIMONY TO THE JOINT FISCAL COMMITTEES OF THE
NEW YORK STATE SENATE AND NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY
February 14, 2023**

Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. The League is a nonpartisan, grassroots organization with a mission to educate the public to become engaged members of their communities and informed voters. I will highlight three areas today in my testimony: climate funding, expansion of the bottle bill and removal of packaging reduction attempts in the budget.

Climate Funding

The League strongly supports the ambitious and essential Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA). In order to meet the goals of the CLCPA, it's estimated that annual investments must be at least \$10 billion. We must ensure that New York State has the funds available to meet the mandates. Implementation of the CLCPA, as well as key programs for climate mitigation and adaptation, must be funded through the budget. Implementation will require sufficient funding to agencies so they have the staff and resources to develop needed new regulations and programs.

We encourage the Legislature to create a Climate and Community Protection Fund, which would act as a pool of resources to fund the programs necessary to meet the CLCPA mandates. This fund is a necessary measure to ensure accountability, compliance with the 35% investment mandate in disadvantaged communities, and to safeguard climate funds so that they are used for their stated purpose.

NYSERDA's integration analysis, included within the Climate Action Council's Scoping Plan, indicates that by investing in these initiatives up front it would result in net benefits to New York ranging from \$90 - \$120 billion through 2050. Initial investments into this program will allow New York to attain the pollution reduction, climate justice and equity mandates established by the CLCPA. New York State passed one of the most ambitious climate laws in the nation when we passed the CLCPA, but there now must be a serious funding commitment to ensure that these progressive reforms are not unfunded mandates.

Expansion of the Bottle Bill

The League encourages the legislature to expand and modernize the Bottle Deposit Law in the budget.

By including legislation that expands and modernizes the Bottle Bill, New York will lead the way on reducing waste, litter, and greenhouse gas emissions. The Bottle Bill is one of the most successful waste reduction laws in New York State history. Over its 40-year history, the Bottle Bill has proven to be a highly effective program in reducing litter and increasing recycling rates. The Bottle Bill reduces roadside container litter by 70%, and in 2020, 5.5 billion containers were recycled in the state. The expanded model of this bill, the Bigger Better Bottle Bill, would expand the types of deposit containers covered under the program and raise the deposit amount to ten cents. These changes could potentially increase redemption rates to 90%.

It is essential that New York addresses its waste issues with a fully modernized Bottle Bill—one that increases the deposit and includes additional containers. The Bigger, Better Bottle Bill must expand the program to include wine, spirits, hard cider, and most non-carbonated beverages. The bill must also increase the deposit from 5-cents to 10-cents and use revenues to support recycling equity. States with higher deposit fees have higher redemption rates than states with a five-cent fee. In Michigan the deposit fee is 10-cents, and the redemption rate was 89% in 2019. Increasing the deposit could also generate more revenues for the state, which can be used to address limits on redemption options in low-income communities and other litter and solid waste problems in such communities.

Expanding the Bottle Bill is a key solution to address solid waste pollution, rising costs for municipalities, as well as extending the life of landfills around the state. Single-use plastic packaging makes up more than 40% of new plastic manufactured from fossil fuels; after a brief use, it is discarded, where it persists in the environment indefinitely and poses threats to wildlife and human health. The climate impacts of plastic are significant: plastic production, use, and disposal is on track to exceed coal emissions in the U.S. by 2030.

Not only would the expansion of the state's Bottle Bill increase recycling rates and make New York's environment and communities cleaner, it would also help municipal recycling programs that are currently facing a recycling crisis. Municipal recycling programs are especially struggling with glass containers in their recycling streams. When glass breaks in curbside containers it can render much of the other materials unrecyclable for the municipality, or "contaminated". The expansion of the Bottle Bill to include wine, spirits, and hard cider would take a significant amount of the containers that municipalities are struggling with off their hands.

Lastly, modernization can help stimulate job creation and ease consumer access. Adding containers and a higher deposit will likely create new jobs and benefit redemption center workers. It will also be a much-needed pay raise for the thousands of often poor, immigrant, elderly, or homeless "canners" that clean up empty containers from streets. Investing a portion of the additional revenues collected by the state to ensure better and more uniform compliance and

expanded access to redemption opportunities will enhance equity and allow currently underserved communities to more fully benefit from this historically effective law.

Remove Packaging Reduction Attempts in the Budget

The League encourages the legislature to remove the current inclusion of packaging reduction attempts in the budget and to instead address the reduction of packaging with the passage of the Packaging Reduction and Recycling Act. It is important that the New York State Legislature adopt a strong Packaging Reduction and Recycling bill this session, but it should not be included in this state budget. This is a complex policy issue that should be addressed after the budget is adopted.

Conclusion

The League is greatly appreciative of the environmental commitments made in the Governor's executive budget. However, an even stronger commitment is needed to address some of the most pressing issues of our time. We ask that the legislature consider the requests we've made in our testimony to ensure that New York State continues to lead the way on climate action.