



A Resolution Submitted by the City of Waukegan, IL



ADVANCING CIRCULAR ECONOMY PRACTICES THROUGH IMPROVED WASTE DIVERSION AND BEVERAGE CONTAINER RECOVERY IN THE GREAT LAKES AND ST. LAWRENCE REGION

May 2026

WHEREAS the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin is one of the world's most important freshwater resources, containing over 20 percent of the world's surface freshwater and providing drinking water, transportation, recreation and economic opportunity to tens of millions of people in Canada and the United States.

AND WHEREAS marine and shoreline litter in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River threatens water quality, wildlife and ecosystem health.

AND WHEREAS plastic packaging and beverage containers are among the most commonly collected items in Great Lakes litter assessments, representing a highly preventable and recoverable waste stream.

AND WHEREAS experience in multiple international jurisdictions demonstrates that deposit-return systems for beverage containers can achieve exceptionally high recovery rates, with Norway reporting a 92.3 percent return rate in 2023.

AND WHEREAS beverage container deposit systems are already implemented in ten U.S. states, including the Great Lakes states of Michigan and New York.

AND WHEREAS jurisdictions with deposit-return systems continue to deliver strong results — in the United States alone, nine of the ten states with the highest recycling rates operate deposit-return programs, and according to Eunomia, states with such systems recycle 27 percent more packaging (excluding fibers and flexible plastics) than those without.

- AND WHEREAS effective recycling and waste management systems are essential to preventing beverage containers and other packaging from polluting our freshwater ecosystem, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and meeting governmental waste reduction targets.

AND WHEREAS the Cities Initiative's Economic Transformation Action Plan identifies the promotion of circular economy practices as a key strategy to reduce waste, improve resource efficiency and limit pollution in the region's lakes and rivers, including through measures such as extended producer responsibility systems, waste recovery modernization and industrial reuse and recycling initiatives.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

- The Cities Initiative supports the adoption or modernization of Recycling Refund (Deposit Return) programs across the region, consistent with best practices demonstrated in other jurisdictions around the world, as a critical tool to advance circular economy outcomes, improve material recovery and reduce waste leakage into freshwater systems.
- The Cities Initiative encourages state and local governments to align deposit-return systems with broader circular economy strategies, including extended producer responsibility frameworks, waste reduction targets and efforts to modernize and harmonize recycling systems across jurisdictions.

AND FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED THAT copies of this resolution will be distributed to: the Governors of all eight Great Lakes states, and relevant committee leadership in the U.S. Congress.