



March 25, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom  
California Governor  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom,

We the undersigned represent California's grocery and retail industry and its workforce who are working 24/7 to provide Californian's with the goods they need during the COVID-19 crisis. With that in mind, we write to request you take immediate action to protect the health of our workforce and consumers by temporarily suspending the in-store beverage container take-back requirement under provisions of the "bottle bill" and the provisions pertaining to bags, including the prohibition on single use plastic bags and the requirement that retailers charge \$.10 on paper and reusable plastic carryout bags provided in grocery, pharmacy, and other retail settings, until the Covid-19 virus is no longer a significant health threat in California.

The reason for this request stems from several concerns:

1. Our employees are expressing a great deal of discomfort and fear of exposure in handling both used beverage containers and reusable bags from customers, without knowledge if these items have been thoroughly cleaned and sanitized.
2. The beverage container requirements divert critical on-site resources needed to keep stores clean and stocked at a time of heavy customer traffic.
3. The ban on single use plastic bags and the fee charge to consumers for paper and reusable plastic bags was designed to encourage customers to bring reusable bags into the store when they shop. This is a laudatory environmental policy, but it is simply not appropriate to expect our employees to handle and load customer's used grocery bags at this time.

Grocery and retail stores are taking every precaution possible and following all appropriate federal, state, and local guidance regarding Covid-19 safety. Requiring our employees to continue the routine handling of used beverage containers and reusable bags, in whatever condition they are delivered by a customer, is simply not in-keeping with all other efforts at this time to minimize exposure risk to our employees and to move customers in and out of our stores in a timely fashion. Suspending these requirements would assist us in maintaining maximum cleanliness, limit employee exposure risks, and provide stores with flexibility to manage the surge of customers and ensure the essential items they need are stocked on the shelves.

Given the current challenges, we urge you to follow six of the nine other "bottle bill" states (see Attachment I below) and suspend the beverage container redemption program temporarily until this emergency subsides. We further request the suspension on the prohibition on single use plastic bags and the required charge for bags provided to customers, which will allow stores to handle consumer needs without having to deal with

reusable bags. Other states and localities that followed the lead of California in prohibiting the use of single use plastics bags are either suspending or delaying similar requirements, including the states of Maine, New Hampshire, and New York (see Attachment II), out of concern to the health and safety of the workforce and consumers.

Our members are committed to the success of California's recycling programs as an integral part of our broader effort to improve the environmental sustainability of the supply chain. Concurrent with this request, we re-commit ourselves to working with your Administration to restore and revitalize these important programs once this crisis is over.

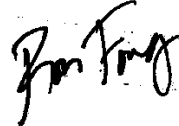
If you have any questions about this request, please contact us at [rmichelin@calretailers.com](mailto:rmichelin@calretailers.com) or [rfong@cagrocers.com](mailto:rfong@cagrocers.com).

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Rachel Michelin  
President & CEO  
California Retailers Association



Ron Fong  
President & CEO  
California Grocers Association

Cc: Dr. Mark Ghaly, Secretary, California Health and Human Services Agency  
Secretary Jared Blumenfeld, California Environmental Protection Agency  
Secretary Julie Su, California Labor and Workforce Development Agency  
Dr. Nadine Burke Harris, California Surgeon General  
Dr. Sonia Angell, Director, California Department of Public Health  
Mr. Ken DaRosa, Acting Director, CalRecycle  
The Honorable Toni Atkins, Senate President Pro Tem  
The Honorable Anthony Rendon, Speaker of the Assembly  
The Honorable Shannon Grove, Senate Minority Leader  
The Honorable Marie Waldron, Assembly Minority Leader  
Ms. Ann O'Leary, Chief of Staff, Governor Gavin Newsom  
Ms. Ana Matasantos, Cabinet Secretary, Governor Newsom Gavin Newsom  
Mr. Lenny Mendonca, Chief Economic and Business Advisor, Governor Gavin Newsom

Attachment I: Links to state "bottle bill" suspension orders/notices

[Connecticut](#)

[Iowa](#)

[Maine](#)

[Massachusetts](#)

[Oregon](#)

[Vermont](#)

*\*\*Michigan is in the process of enacting a similar suspension*

Attachment II: States suspending or delaying implementation of bag bans

[Maine](#)

[New Hampshire](#)

[New York](#)