



*The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*

**House of Representatives**

State House, Boston 02133

*Zero Waste Caucus*

*April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023*

The Honorable Aaron Michlewitz  
Chair, House Ways and Means Committee  
Statehouse, Boston

The Honorable Michael Rodrigues  
Chair, Senate Ways and Means Committee  
Statehouse, Boston

RE: FY2024 Budget

Dear Chair Michlewitz and Chair Rodrigues,

We are writing on behalf of the Zero Waste Caucus with our FY2024 budget request. This year we have only two specific requests relative to the budget. First, we were pleased to see the DEP Administration line item (2200-0100) funded at \$51,969,763 in House 1.

While DEP has a ways to go to be fully staffed at levels that will support adequate enforcement and oversight, this year's request from the Governor will enable the hiring of 50 new DEP employees. This expanded workforce will support critical work in inspections, monitoring, compliance, municipal support, permitting, and other essential oversight functions. There are many examples of why this workforce is needed but we'd like to highlight only a few.

Massachusetts has been unable to enforce its existing regulations pertaining to waste ban items due to insufficient enforcement staff at DEP. In 2020, the most recent year for which DEP has released data, 1.2 million tons of cardboard and paper were still being sent to landfills and incinerators even though these are banned items. With proper enforcement that material could have been recovered in the recycling stream. Since DEP's workforce has been insufficient in recent years, the agency is not performing as it should be. DEP's data lags behind a reasonable schedule and in some cases the data is no longer being produced. In 2012 MassDEP stopped calculating recycling rates entirely. We cannot manage what we do not measure. Delayed data makes it even harder to identify and manage problems when they occur. Finally, despite having explicit goals and metrics laid out in our Solid Waste Master Plan, in 2020 the Commonwealth produced more trash for disposal than at any time over the last ten years – almost six million tons of municipal solid waste. We are heading in the wrong direction and the only way to correct this is through better oversight, support of community programs, and enforcement all of which require an expanded staff at DEP. **We ask that you meet or exceed the Governor's allocation for the DEP Administration line item (2200-0100).**

Second, we continue to believe that the Bottle Bill Escheats should stop being diverted to the general fund. As you may recall, with the budget crunch that occurred during the Romney Administration, the environmental fund which held the unclaimed bottle deposits was swept into the general fund and this practice has continued every year since. The annual revenue averages between \$50 and \$60 million dollars and this is money that could be spent on assisting cities and towns with waste reduction and recycling programs. While

revenue continues to be strong, now is the time to end the practice of using unclaimed bottle deposits to support the general budget. **We ask that an environmental fund, similar to the one originally set up when the bottle bill was passed, be recreated to hold the bottle bill escheats.** Sample language can be found in H3157, "An act restoring the environmental fund with unclaimed bottle deposits."

We thank you for the opportunity to weigh in with our priorities and are happy to answer any questions you might have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michelle Ciccolo". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "M".

Representative Michelle Ciccolo  
House Chair, Zero Waste Caucus

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jason Lewis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J".

Senator Jason Lewis  
Senate Chair, Zero Waste Caucus