

March 5, 2020

Testimony in Support of
S.B. No. 298 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING FOOD WASTE DIVERSION AND ANAEROBIC
DIGESTION FACILITIES and
S.B. No. 11 AN ACT CONCERNING THE RELIABILITY, SUSTAINABILITY AND ECONOMIC VITALITY
OF THE STATE'S WASTE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Chairwoman Cohen, Chairman Demicco, Vice Chairs, Ranking Members and Members of the
Environment Committee

My name is John Philips and I am the Director of Public Works for the Town of West Hartford. I
am writing today to support the bills listed above.

The Town performed a small Pilot, volunteer trial food scrap waste curbside collection program,
with the cooperation of our solid waste receiver, hauler and food scrap receiver. The pilot was a
great learning opportunity for the Town to study the implementation and logistics of a curbside
food scrap diversion program. Senate Bill 298 would allow other towns to try a pilot and is a
great way for municipalities to learn what tools work best for their residents.

One key learning experience for West Hartford was the importance of compostable bags. These
bags were necessary and critical for the participation and handling of the food scraps for our
residents. For the resident waste generator, compostable bags were used for basic
housekeeping purposes to contain the “yuck” factors associated with food scraps. For example,
odors, liquids, moisture, handling and lining storage containers. Compostable film bags were
overwhelmingly preferred over paper bags, where liquid and moisture would cause rapid
deterioration of the bag and freezing issues with wet paper bags stuck to disposal containers.
Storing food scrapes in a container without a compostable liner was a deal breaker to trial
program participants. No one wished to deal with a “slop” pail full of a week’s worth of food
scraps waiting for collection. Nor would our hauler want to handle food scrapes as a loose slop
material.

Traditional plastic bags are known hazards to our environment and wildlife. It’s important to
use environmentally sensitive bag materials such as compostable bags to continue the progress
implementing beneficial food diversion programs. Knowing that not all bags are manufactured
alike and there is a considerable amount of fraudulent, misleading products and information for
consumers to understand, I support legislative standards that adopt compostable product
labeling with specific labeling and certification of compostable bags. The labeling must be easy
for the consumer to identify and understand. Most importantly compostable bag standards
should meet ASTM D6400 standards. Bags certified under ASTM 6400 standards should be
encouraged and utilized with food scrap diversion programs, grocery store fruit and vegetable



bags and offered to consumers for purchase. It seems to be a common sense approach to feed society's appetite for plastic bags and a sustainable tool for waste diversion programs.

Finally, I support the Governor's bill, Senate Bill 11, which will allow towns and businesses managing waste to work together to apply for funding to implement new, innovative programs and projects to better manage our waste. West Hartford is interested in diverting more glass from its recycling waste stream and will be anxious to work with partners to try to achieve that goal. Connecticut's waste management infrastructure needs investment and Senate Bill 11 reflects a thoughtful and market-based approach to achieve that goal.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my support for these bills.

Sincerely,

John Philips

Public Works Director

Town of West Hartford