

Environment Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5577

AN ACT CONCERNING SURPLUS FOOD DONATION AND ESTABLISHING

Title: FOOD COMPOSTING REQUIREMENTS.

Vote Date: 3/10/2023

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Change of Reference to Appropriations

PH Date: 2/27/2023

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Environment Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

To reduce food waste in municipalities.

JFS Language

LCO 5738

Require donation plans from all such affected commercial entries and prioritized food donations prior to source separation of organic materials for certain facilities.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Katie Dykes, Commissioner, Department of Energy and Environment:

Commissioner Dykes and DEEP support the concepts and the aims are consistent with the Connecticut Comprehensive Materials Management Strategy. The bill is also consistent with the states statutory waste hierarchy that favors source reduction and reuse, recycling and composting. We do have concerns with Section 2(a)(2) with the bill requiring us to amend regulations to adopt best practices on an accelerated timeline.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Medina Domingo, Owner, Peels and Wheels Composting:

Mr. Domingo testified as a resident and local community composting owner in New Haven organic residues as a resource to be recycled. Current grants and pilot initiatives concentrate in collection of organic waste but very little in infrastructure development. DEEP believes that organics separation though easy, convenient and affordable for generators but the models face the challenge in how to increase participation in reducing waste and source separation and minimizing contaminants. An example in Aerated Static Pile Composting can be found in OCRRA Amboy in Syracuse.

Yale Dems:

Fourteen individuals sent testimony from the Yale Dems on how the bill establishes food composting requirements for corporations and business therefore providing food-insecure families with food donations. Over 4900,00 residents struggle from food insecurities. The bill gives desperately need municipalities the framework for food composting. Diverting waste from landfills by composting will produce 50% less greenhouse gas emissions.

Nancy Bowden, Member, Bloomfield's Conservation Energy and Environment Committee:

Ms. Bowden testified the bill should encourage business to work with community organizations to donate "day old" products. She would also support amendments that seek to change the effective date but not the requirements in the bill.

Julie DesChamps, Waste Free Greenwich:

Ms. DesChamps testified in 2020 the Town of Greenwich established a food scrap recycling program that diverted 120 tons of food scraps from the waste stream. The program has not moved the needle on waste reduction, but this bill can help the massive delta between potential and actual diversion. Three points that need to be included in the bill.

- Remove the 20-mile limitations.

- The list of large generators is too limited

- Include mechanisms for education and enforcement

Jasmine Garcia:

Ms. Garcia testified as the daughter of immigrant parents I understand the struggles of food insecurity. Diminishing food insecurity will promote success for our 131,000 children and have a positive effect on the state by reducing greenhouse emissions.

Ali Ghiorse, The Foodshed Network, Greenwich:

Mr. Ghiorse testified how important the bill elements as diverting organics out of the waste stream. Food scraps are an asset and recyclable. Our food system produces plenty of food to feed everyone in fact we over produce but waste and do not reuse.

Diane Keefe, Norwalk:

Ms. Keefe testified as a Quaker and member of the American Sustainable Business Network of Fairfield County. We represent organics management professionals, composting service business owners and citizen advocates from over a dozen towns. Connecticut should adopt the approach taken by the state of New York.

Lori Martin, Executive Director, Haven's Harvest:

Ms. Martin submitted testimony on behalf of Haven's Harvest whose mission is to build community and reduce food waste. In order to address the excess food waste, we need to create a pathway to food recovery. We know that food producers do NOT want to throw away food. The three obstacles that hinder the process are liability, transportation and the community contact. Food rescue organizations are working to remove the obstacles.

Haley Schulman, National Site Coordinator, Food Rescue US:

Ms. Schulman testified that Connecticut is in a waste crisis. Our organization engages volunteers and food donors thru our web-based apt to directly transfer nutritious access food for social serviced agencies serving the food insecure. Our operators are currently in Fairfield, Litchfield and Hartford Counties. The lifetime achievements of our organization are to divert over 47 million pounds of food from the waste stream into the kitchens, pantries and plates of our most venerable neighbors. The waste stream from grocery supermarkets is edible and of the highest nutritional value and they donate anywhere from 2-14 times per week.

Christian Tower:

As a student at Ledyard High School, I have documented for some time how to bring up the subject of providing free food for kids from Kindergarten through Grade 12. Based on research from End Hunger Connecticut 51.6% of students participate in free or reduced lunch programs and some places have a 12.8% have a rate of food insecurity. The benefits would be making school systems better for people who want to go into a better less expensive school and a better environment for low-income people for all grades.

The following also submitted testimony in support of the bill:

Ann Gadwah, Sierra Club Connecticut
Lenore Grunko, Deep River Sustainable
Eileen Kopec
Thomas Olson
Prince Osaji
David Rauch
Anne Schmidt
Scott Smith, Friends of Animals
Kimberly Stoner, CT Northeast Organic Farming Association
Andrew Tran

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Danielle Franks submitted testimony in opposition

Reported by: Pamela Bianca

Date March 14, 2023