



Housatonic Resources Recovery Authority

Testimony SB 191 – **SUPPORT**

AN ACT CONCERNING FOOD SCRAPS DIVERSION FROM THE SOLID WASTE STREAM AND THE REDEMPTION OF OUT-OF-STATE BEVERAGE CONTAINERS.

Environment Committee Public Hearing – Friday, March 8, 2024

To: Honored Co-Chairs, Sen. Lopes and Rep. Gresko, Sen. Harding and Rep. Callahan, and distinguished Members of the Environment Committee,

The Housatonic Resources Recovery Authority is the regional, governmental, solid waste and recycling authority for 14 Municipalities in Western Connecticut that include *Bethel, Bridgewater, Brookfield, Danbury, Kent, New Fairfield, New Milford, Newtown, Redding, Ridgefield, Roxbury, Sherman & Weston and Wilton.*

In 2014 the HRRRA developed and tested the state's first municipal organics curbside collection program of its kind in Bridgewater, CT. The pilot program proved to be successful in engaging participation with the public. Approximately 16% of the town took part in separating their food waste from the waste stream. The material collected was nearly free of contamination and was sent to a commercial facility in a neighboring town to be processed into compost. Each spring the compost is returned to the residents to be used in their home gardens and projects. The ending factor of the curbside collection was cost. At the end of the pilot, residents were not willing to pay the private hauler for the collection at the curb. Taking that into consideration and not wanting the source separation of food scraps to stop, the program transitioned to a municipal drop-off program only, which allowed residents to drop-off at no additional cost. Residents now bring their food scraps to the town recycling center and a private hauler then transports the material to the local commercial processor and the compost is then returned in the spring. This food scraps recycling program has been duplicated and implemented in eight additional HRRRA member municipalities of Bethel, Kent, Newtown, New Fairfield, Redding, Ridgefield, Weston and Wilton Connecticut. We are proving that municipalities can provide easy and convenient access for food scrap diversion.

Organics programs provide the largest opportunity to increase Connecticut's waste diversion goals. According to the 2015 waste composition study (by CT DEEP), over 926,000 tons of readily compostable organics were disposed, or nearly 40 percent of total MSW disposal. This included over: 519,000 tons of food waste; 56,000 tons of yard waste (e.g., branches and stumps, pruning and trimmings); 100,000 tons of leaves and grass; and 249,000 tons of compostable paper (e.g., uncoated paper cups and plates, paper food cartons, napkins, and paper towels).

In 2021 the HRRRA received a USDA grant and a RecycleCT Foundation Lee Sawyer grant to construct a solar powered **Aerated Static Pile (ASP)** composting system. The overall objective was to demonstrate that municipalities can create a closed loop sustainable composting system to manage food waste locally, reducing the carbon footprint and cost of offsite disposal and contributing to the waste diversion goals of

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the state. The success of the Ridgefield project has paved the way to build a second municipal ASP composting system in Newtown, funded by the CT DEEP SMM Grant.

The town of Ridgefield diverted over 52,890 lbs. or 26.45 tons of food scraps in 2023 and generated over 70 cubic yards of compost which has increased access to readily available compost to residents, community garden groups and local farmers without relying on synthetic fertilizers. In addition, it has empowered the municipality to use the compost for stormwater management and soil erosion.

The second objective of the project was to create an enhanced educational program for back-yard composting for residents who wish to manage their food waste at home.

The third objective was to introduce food recovery efforts at schools and at home to prevent the waste being generated in the first place.

Our success was made possible by the financial support and partnership of the CT DEEP, RecycleCT Foundation and USDA. It's important the state of Connecticut recognize municipalities need financial support to succeed in the waste diversion goals of the state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer Heaton-Jones". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jennifer A. Heaton-Jones
Executive Director, HRRRA