

For immediate release

March 4, 2022

Contact:

Rep. Joe Fitzgibbon, Joe.Fitzgibbon@leg.wa.gov (564) 888-2362 (or Dave Breed (360) 360-0180)

Sen. Mona Das, Mona.Das@leg.wa.gov (360) 786-7692 (or Hannah M. Sabio Howell (630) 456-3332)

Heather Trim, Zero Waste Washington, heather@zerowashwashington.org (206) 351-2898

Aaron Czyzewski, Food Lifeline, aaronc@foodlifeline.org (813) 503-3535

Janet Thoman, Compost Manufacturing Alliance, janet@composterapproved.com (425) 999-2178

Troy Lautenbach, Skagit Soils, Troy@lautenbachrecycling.com (360) 815-3222

Deepa Sivarajan, Climate Solutions, deepa.sivarajan@climatesolutions.org (206) 351-0921

Darby Hoover, Natural Resources Defense Council, dhoover@nrdc.org (415) 875-6157

Bill to reduce food and yard waste at landfills passes second house in Washington

Law would be a significant step towards reducing methane gas generation at landfills

Olympia. On Thursday, the Senate passed [E2SHB 1799](#), a bill to reduce food and yard waste at landfills in Washington. The bill passed the Senate with bipartisan support (34-14-1) after being passed by the House on February 11. If concurred and signed by the governor into law, HB 1799 puts Washington on the road towards increased food donation, composting, and anaerobic digestion.

The bill establishes a goal of 75% reduction in the amount of organic materials disposed in landfills by 2030, relative to 2015 levels, and a separate goal that at least 20% of the volume of edible food disposed of be recovered for human consumption by 2025, relative to 2015.

"Washington is taking a big step forward in improving our management of organic materials, putting what used to be waste to productive use, and reducing methane emissions from landfills," said Representative Joe Fitzgibbon (D-Seattle), the bill's prime sponsor.

Washington joins other states, including New York, Maryland and California, that have recently increased diversion of food or yard waste from landfills. "At this point, in 2022, we have the creativity and the technology to limit waste and build communities where no one goes hungry," said Sen. Mona Das (D-Kent), Senate sponsor. "This is about taking care of today's problems and passing on solutions – not more problems – to the next generation inheriting this state and this earth. I for one want to leave Washington better than I found it."

The bill amends the state's *Good Samaritan Food Donation Act* to make it easier for groceries, restaurants and food manufacturers to donate excess food to food rescue groups.

"It's good to see the provisions of the bill that encourage food donation and will lead to even further coordination in how the state's food system and hunger relief efforts connect," said Aaron Czyzewski, Director, Advocacy and Public Policy for Food Lifeline.

Further, HB 1799 sets in motion more source-separated organic waste curbside pickup in the state's populous counties, and collection of food and yard waste from the largest generators such as groceries, hotels, and food processors.

Under the bill, the Washington State Department of Ecology will create a new Center for Sustainable Food Management to help match businesses and others with surplus food with entities that can deliver that food to residents in need, manage organic material flows, and track progress.

Many companies and cities and counties already divert this waste. "This is a critical step to ensure that we divert more of the organic material to composting, anaerobic digesting, vermiculture and new innovative technologies," said Heather Trim, executive Director of Zero Waste Washington. "As an agricultural state, getting more high quality compost to our farmers is great for both soil health and carbon sequestration."

A new compost reimbursement program for Washington farmers for purchase of compost and compost spreading equipment would be established. The bill also requires that by January 1, 2023, cities and counties with populations greater than 25,000 adopt ordinances addressing procurement of compost.

"This bill would not only divert food and yard waste from the landfill, but it would allow composting facilities to create jobs and contribute to climate change solutions," said Troy Lautenbach, co-owner of Skagit Soils. "Our work converts food that was trash to nutrient rich mulch and returned to where food is grown, for full circle sustainability. "

Washington would be first in the nation to require that compostable foodware be color marked.

"We are excited that the bill will help reduce confusion by requiring that compostable foodware be green, brown or beige colored or have a color stripe," said Janet Thoman, Compliance Director of Compost Manufacturing Alliance (CMA). "By making easier for residents and facility workers to distinguish these products, we can help reduce the plastic contamination in compost."

"Every pound of methane gas emitted from decomposing organic waste in a landfill has the global warming effect of 80 pounds of CO₂," said Darby Hoover, Senior Resource Specialist, Natural Resources Defense Council. "HB 1799 will make a significant difference in preventing methane pollution from landfills, and instead encouraging ecologically better strategies like waste prevention, surplus food donation, and composting."

Deepa Sivarajan, Washington Clean Buildings Policy Manager for Climate Solutions added, "We applaud Rep. Fitzgibbon and the bill sponsors for their work on this important piece of climate legislation. Directly tackling methane will help us bend the climate change curve faster."

####