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Food waste bill heads to Governor Inslee

HB2301 diverts food and organic waste from the landfill to food donation and composting

Olympia – Today the Washington State House concurred on House Bill [2301](#). The food waste bill is now on its way to the governor for his signature. The bill passed the Senate by a vote of 30-19 on March 1 and previously the House by a vote of 58-39 with one excused.

The bill helps divert food waste and other organic material from the landfill and builds on a 2019 bill also led by the prime sponsor, Representative Beth Doglio (D-Olympia), which established a goal to reduce the generation of food waste by 50% by 2030 and reduce edible food waste by 50%. A second bill, championed by Representative Joe Fitzgibbon in 2022 (HB1799), established state goals to divert 75% of organic material to landfills by 2030 and recover 20% of disposed edible food by 2025, both relative to 2015 levels.

“HB2301 takes yet another big step forward to get food waste out of the landfill. Food waste is a major contributor of methane gas – a potent greenhouse gas - when it rots in landfills,” said Doglio. “Edible food that often ends up in the landfill should be going to feeding people and the rest to compost and other organic management technologies. Plus, reducing food waste is something people can do in their daily lives to help fight climate change.”

This legislation taps into existing capabilities to source large volume donations for distribution to state food bank distribution centers who in turn will offer it to food banks and pantries throughout the state.

Senator John Lovick (D-Mill Creek), who shepherded the bill in the Senate added, “I have visited numerous food banks and helped out as a volunteer and have seen firsthand how critical the food recovery system is for our communities. I am proud that this bill will help get more food to hungry people in Washington.”

Getting food to hungry people

Washington produces enough food to feed everyone, but each year wastes millions of pounds of perfectly good food while nearly 2 million Washingtonians face hunger.

“In fact, Washington can nearly double the donated surplus food available for hunger relief efforts statewide – food that may otherwise be lost – at a time when it is needed most,” said Aaron Czyzewski, Director of Advocacy and Public Policy at Food Lifeline. “HB2301 encourages food donation by building on partnerships between Washington growers and grocers and hunger relief agencies. And importantly, it decodes the connection between climate and food systems to put Washington on a path to achieve its wasted food reduction and climate goals.”

Jay Kang, President and CEO of Thurston County Food Bank continued, “The bill empowers the hunger network to work with local growers and grocery stores, creating a robust system to increase donations to food banks, and ensure these vital food sources remain available to the folks in the community.”

The bill directs the newly established [Washington Center for Sustainable Food Management](#) at Ecology to convene a work group to study food donations, recovery systems, and infrastructure. And importantly, HB2301 sets up grants to support innovative pilots and infrastructure to maximize food donation.

“Independent grocers are passionate about reducing food waste and are excited about the new opportunities provided in this bill to strengthen their partnerships with local food banks,” said Katie Beeson, Government Affairs Director for the Washington Food Industry Association.

Bringing composting to urbanized areas

As part of HB2301, compost collection will be required for single family residents in urbanized areas of the state. The bill also sets up a new grant program to help city and county staff and others to do technical assistance, education, enforcement and upgrade infrastructure.

“It will be great when more of our residents are separating their food scraps and sending them to composting or other technologies such as anaerobic digestion or even vermiculture by worms,” said Heather Trim, Executive Director of Zero Waste Washington. “I am especially excited by the study that Ecology will do to look at the status of plastic produce stickers. Consumers and composters really want to get rid of those and switch to paper or compostable stickers.”

Kate Kurtz, Board President of Washington Organic Recycling Council (WORC) said “WORC believes HB2301 is a win for hunger relief, the climate, and health of our soils. The bill also gives facilities and haulers the predictability of feedstock generation they need to make decisions about expansion and other capital investments here in Washington.”

“Washington state has always been a national leader in terms of composting, and this bill provides excellent opportunities to expand composting access across the state,” said Jay Blazey, General Counsel for Cedar Grove Composting. “The environmental benefit of composting compared to landfilling cannot be overstated.”

Updating compostable product labeling requirements

Finally, HB2301 modifies requirements for products to be labeled as compostable to be sold in Washington.

Janet Thoman, co-director and legislative liaison for Compost Manufacturing Alliance (CMA), one of two national compostable product certifiers based in Washington state, said “We are pleased that HB2301 addresses the need to properly manage compostable products in the marketplace as these products play an important role in food waste diversion.”

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