

Bella Quiroa
Regarding Rhode Island House Finance Committee

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My name is Bella Quiroa, and I'm a resident of Newport and high school senior at the East Bay Met. I am testifying about how Rhode Island's food waste ban has led to incredible environmental strides around the state, though the current bill has made for limitations in its widespread impact.

As an intern with various environmental organizations I've helped my mentors to run composting programs in schools around Rhode Island. Through this work I have had a firsthand look at the amount of food waste that our schools are able to produce. To give an example, I would go to the Lawn School in Jamestown every Wednesday and they consistently produced 30 pounds of food waste from only two lunch periods, and this is the same for many other schools in the state. What this experience has also shown me is the amount of food that could've been saved and donated to students facing food insecurity, or local food banks.

In addition to my experience as an intern, I led the charge to implement a composting program at my school. Due to this law's existence, I was able to pressure my school administration into taking on the program, and I was lucky enough for them to listen. Though, even with this law requiring schools to compost, food waste continues piling up in trash cans—untouched and ignored. Schools weren't refusing to comply; they were left without the resources to succeed. Frustrated Emma Pautz, another senior in the state, and I surveyed schools across the state. The results spoke for themselves: only one in three had composting programs, and most administrators didn't even know the mandate existed. We brought those findings to legislators because the truth was undeniable—schools had been left behind by a promise made but never kept.

H5422 finally offers a path forward. It mandates waste audits, holds vendors accountable, and requires transparent reporting. It ensures composting moves from intention to action. But this bill is about more than waste. It's about responsibility. When laws pass without follow-through, they become meaningless. Words alone don't build trust. Action does. H5422 proves that progress doesn't end with legislation—it starts there. It shows students that their voices can drive real change, not just temporary attention. Pass this bill, and show that commitments, once made, are commitments kept.

Thank you Committee Chair, Representative McNamara, and the House Education Committee for your time in reading my testimony. Your consideration of these matters and passing HB No. 5422 as a solution is very much appreciated.