

Jennifer Wieting  
Zero Waste Providence  
House Bill 5195  
I am in favor of this legislation

May 13th, 2025

Dear Members of the House Finance Committee,

My name is Jennifer Wieting and I strongly support House Bill 5195. As a Rhode Island resident, I split my time between Providence and Little Compton. In 2017 I joined the group Zero Waste Providence. My primary motivation to get involved with local environmentalists was to promote composting and food scrap diversion. My parents, both Republicans, grew up during the depression era. Separating food scraps from their trash was ingrained behavior that they both modeled for as long as I can remember. My 95-year-old mom still recalls her childhood in Little Compton when the local pig farmer would come by weekly on his wagon and collect the family's food scraps to feed his livestock. As an adult, I realized that sadly, many of the environmentally friendly habits I picked up from my parents were lost on younger generations.

Luckily, in recent years, momentum to divert food scraps from our landfill in Rhode Island has been steadily building. My children attended a Providence school where they were expected to separate their food scraps in the lunch room. Diverting food scraps in the cafeteria was an easy adjustment for faculty and students to make. Changing the behavior of both institutions and residents by implementing stronger, sustainable waste diversion systems will help RI reach our climate goals in the critical, upcoming years.

Today there are organic-waste processing facilities available in Rhode Island but we must do more to support the infrastructure for this deeply valuable industry. A two-dollar per ton surcharge on all waste entering the landfill will create a much needed fund to help both municipalities and businesses develop and support composting infrastructure and educate people across the state. This legislation will motivate municipalities to reduce their landfill waste because it will lower their tipping fees, offsetting the surcharge. The more organic waste that is removed, the more money a town will save. In addition, the compost fund revenue will support the development of new jobs for Rhode Islanders.

Composting is beneficial to our environment and food systems on multiple levels. It helps our food production by adding nutrients to our soil, which then produces healthier crops for our community. Additionally, composting our waste and diverting it from the landfill reduces our methane and carbon dioxide emissions.

This legislation will foster a robust infrastructure that can significantly reduce the organic food waste entering our landfill, reduce emissions and potentially create many new jobs. Now more than ever, we need to adjust our course. Passing this composting and organic waste diversion bill is a critical step Rhode Island needs to take to support this important industry and reach our waste reduction goals. I believe that once again, food scrap diversion can become second nature for most Rhode Islanders.

Thank you,  
Jennifer Wieting

