



Environment Council of Rhode Island

Testimony in support of House Bill 5195, House Finance Committee, May 13 2025, by Peter Trafton, Providence, RI

Dear Chair Abney and Honorable Committee Members,

On behalf of the Environment Council of Rhode Island, I write with strong support for H 5195 by Rep. Cortvriend and colleagues – the composting and organic waste diversion program

Rhode Island has a serious problem with food and other organic waste being sent to our central landfill. It's about 1/3 of the total, at a time when we are rapidly using up the landfill's remaining space. Our towns pay extra costs for transportation and tipping. Placed in the landfill, organic waste breaks down slowly, occupies more space, and produces methane, a greenhouse gas.

And we lose the benefits of proper composting of organic waste. Managed properly, organic waste becomes a rich soil fertilizer valued by farmers and landscapers. This is a far better answer - turning one third of what were dumping in the landfill into valuable soil. We just need to make it happen.

H5195 will help us do so. The bill adds a small surcharge (\$2 per ton of solid waste) to the tipping fee for each truckload. That money is used to plan and support composting program development and public education about organic waste management. The money will be available as grants to cities and towns to develop and manage their own local composting programs. These will include food waste prevention, food rescue and recovery and minimizing illegal dumping. Current local composting companies will grow larger. No separate funding from the state budget will be used for the Composting and Organic Waste Diversion Program.

Local farmers will benefit from the increased availability of compost to support their food production, thus providing circular waste management for one third of the current waste presently hauled to the central landfill. Local food sourcing will be improved with nutritional benefits to many Rhode Islanders.

The Environment Council of Rhode Island urges you to support H5195. As we watch enthusiastic support from Rhode Island's cities and towns, we see great promise for adoption of time-honored techniques for organic waste management.

We just have to help it become simple and easy. Many cities and towns in the United States are doing this already. Many individuals do it themselves. Our family does – we cannot imagine our own food and other organic waste management without. We cannot imagine our gardens without. More than 75 years ago our neighbor, a Harvard professor, taught my parents how to compost. Our children and grandchildren follow the same practices.

Please support H5195. Help our landfill last longer, save some money on management of organic waste, and help our gardens grow greener and food become more plentiful.

Thank you for considering our comments and supporting this important Bill.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "PG Trafton". The letters are cursive and somewhat stylized, with the "P" and "G" being particularly prominent.

Peter Trafton, MD

Co-VP of Policy, Environment Council of Rhode Island