



Epic Renewal
support@epicrenewal.org
10 Davol Square, Ste 100
Providence RI 02903

Dear Chairman Abney and Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

My name is Tess Feigenbaum, I'm a Pawtucket resident, and I support HB5195 because I've seen firsthand the economic, environmental, and social benefits of implementing compost infrastructure. As cofounder of Epic Renewal, a community compost organization based in Pawtucket and Central Falls, I've spent the last eight years working with composters throughout the country as they implement community-centered composting programs and infrastructure.

We currently dump over a hundred thousand tons of compostable material in the landfill per year, which will reach its capacity within 19 years. When we run out of space in our landfill, our tipping fees will exponentially increase, raising costs to municipalities and residents alike. In addition to those economic challenges, when our food and yard waste goes to landfill, it releases methane, a greenhouse gas 25 times more potent than CO₂. When we treat these waste streams as the resources they are rather than discards, we unlock a myriad of economic, social, and environmental benefits, all while extending the life of our landfill.

Implementing composting infrastructure allows us to reduce our trucking and hauling footprint by keeping our discards and their benefits local. This work allows for inclusive job creation, offering up to 14 jobs per 10k tons of material composted, and provides an excellent nontraditional pathway to employment. Community-oriented composters often behave as critical community support structures, offering engagement points that promote communal belonging, and connecting community members to social services, food access, and other critical resources, while plugging equity gaps for residents of low income and historically excluded communities.

Composting allows us to close the loop in our food systems, by taking our waste and turning it into a vital amendment that builds healthy soils, supporting agriculture and our climate in powerful ways, from the ground up. Healthy soils can help draw down and sequester more carbon in the ground allowing it to act as the building block of life it's meant to be. This allows for increased water absorption and retention, replenishing our water tables, and creating resilience to drought, flooding, and other environmental crises. That sequestered carbon also acts like any carbon filter, drawing heavy metals and toxins out of our groundwater. Healthy soil allows our farmers to grow more nutritious and abundant food with the same footprint, and without the use of toxic and expensive pesticides, herbicides, and synthetic fertilizers. Strengthening our soil strengthens our entire ecosystem, promoting health and resilience for our climate, our communities, and our workforce, all while leveraging a resource we have in abundance.

This bill will enable our municipalities to take the first step towards developing inclusive and accessible infrastructure and connect with tailored technical assistance and matchmaking support. The competitive grant portion of the Compost Fund will also enable our compost service providers to match the investment made by our municipalities with program-specific funding to ensure success and resilience. For less than \$2/household per year, we can build a steady source of funding for composting and waste diversion programs to get off the ground while also incentivizing people and municipalities to reduce their waste. This bill provides an all around win-win: transforming a waste stream into a critical economic, environmental, and social resource that we can reinvest in our state's agriculture, turning waste into wealth.

I urge you to support HB5195 and invest in our soil, our climate, and our future.

Sincerely,
Tess Feigenbaum
Pawtucket, RI