



Via Electronic Mail

April 15, 2026

The Honorable V. Susan Sosnowski
Chair, Senate Environment and Agriculture Committee
Senate Lounge, State House
Providence, RI 02903

Re: CLF Supports Senate Bill No. 2437 – Refuse Disposal

Dear Chair Sosnowski:

Conservation Law Foundation (“CLF”) appreciates the opportunity to comment on Senate Bill No. 2437, which would authorize the Department of Environmental Management (“DEM”) to enforce the existing Food Waste Ban through issuing and enforcing regulations.

Founded in 1966, CLF is a member-supported non-profit advocacy organization working to protect public health and the environment and build healthy communities in Rhode Island and throughout New England. CLF aims to improve waste management through source reduction, recycling, and composting, and to protect our communities from the dangers posed by unsustainable waste management practices.

Currently, educational entities like schools that generate at least 30 tons of organic waste per year, and are located within 15 miles of one, are required to divert that organic waste to a composting facility or anaerobic digester. The same is required of other businesses, like supermarkets or prisons,¹ that produce at least 104 tons of organic waste per year. S-2437 is a common-sense way of putting the law to work.

S-2437 will implement the benefits of diverting food waste from needlessly piling up at the landfill by promoting composting for the benefit of Rhode Island’s people and environment. These benefits are wide: there can be immediate reductions in expensive solid waste disposal fees for municipalities, as well as improved soil that is more resilient to droughts and floods. Compost also acts as a carbon sink, sequestering carbon in our soils.²

¹ The diversion requirement applies to commercial food wholesalers or distributors, industrial food manufacturers or processors, supermarkets, resorts or conference centers, banquet halls, restaurants, religious institutions, military installations, prisons, corporations, hospitals or other medical care institutions, and casinos. R.I. Gen. Laws § 23-18.9-7(19).

² Brenda Platt, Institute for Local Self-Reliance, *State of Composting in the US: What, Why, Where & How* ES-4, 27 (2014), <https://ilsr.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/state-of-composting-in-us.pdf>.

The Central Landfill is projected to reach capacity by 2034.³ Organic waste comprises 27.5 percent (by weight) of all municipal solid waste buried in the Central Landfill.⁴ Diverting this organic waste would significantly extend the lifespan of the Central Landfill. Further, composting is a superior job-creator. On a per-ton basis, a compost facility can support between two and five times as many jobs as a landfill.⁵

These bans not only increase diversion to compost, but they also increase food donations. After a similar ban in Vermont took effect, the Vermont Food Bank reported a 25–30% increase in donations in 2015, and an additional 40% increase in 2016.⁶ Cuts to federal funding has resulted in some of the highest levels of food insecurity in Rhode Island in more than twenty years, with the Rhode Island Community Food Bank reporting record levels of need. An improved food waste ban is a small, but important, step in addressing this crisis.

Each year, over 100,000 tons of food is dumped in the landfill.⁷ This shortens the life of the Central Landfill, increases municipal solid waste disposal fees, increases methane emissions, and depletes the health and resilience of our soils. Investing now in composting the organic waste *already covered by Rhode Island law* has the potential to benefit Rhode Island and its municipalities, citizens, and environment for years to come.

S-2437 is an important way to empower DEM to regulate an existing, necessary set of policies. We therefore ask that you support passage of S-2437.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this testimony.

Respectfully submitted,



Erin Ritter
Program Coordinator, Rhode Island
Conservation Law Foundation

cc: Members of the Senate Environment & Agriculture Committee

³ R.I. Resource Recovery Corp., *Long-Term Solid Waste Disposal Alternatives Study* i–ii (2018), <http://www.rirrc.org/sites/default/files/2018-09/RIRRC%20Final%20Report%2020180716.pdf>.

⁴ *Rhode Island Solid Waste Characterization Study* 13 (2015), <http://www.rirrc.org/sites/default/files/2017-02/Waste%20Characterization%20Study%202015.pdf>.

⁵ See *id.* at 43–44; Tellus Institute, *More Jobs, Less Pollution: Growing the Recycling Economy in the U.S.* 34–35 (2011), https://www.nrdc.org/sites/default/files/glo_11111401a_0.pdf.

⁶ See Leibrock, *supra* note 11.

⁷ *Rhode Island Solid Waste Characterization Study* 13 (2015), <http://www.rirrc.org/sites/default/files/2017-02/Waste%20Characterization%20Study%202015.pdf>.



Senator Bridget Valverde
Senator Pamela J. Lauria
Senator Dawn Euer
Senator Louis P. DiPalma
Senator Mark McKenney
Senator Samuel W. Bell
Senator Tiara T. Mack
Darrèll Brown, Vice President, Rhode Island, Conservation Law Foundation