



For a thriving New England

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Via Electronic Mail

April 28, 2026

The Honorable Louis P. DiPalma
Chair, Senate Committee on Finance
Room 211, State House
Providence, RI 02903

Re: CLF **Supports** Senate Bill No. 2441 – Composting and Organic Waste Diversion

Dear Chair DiPalma:

Conservation Law Foundation (“CLF”) appreciates the opportunity to comment on Senate Bill No. 2441, which would establish a compost fund from which the Department of Environmental Management (“DEM”) would award grants to assist with the costs of developing, implementing, and expanding composting infrastructure, equipment, education, and local programs related to diverting organic solid waste from the state’s Central Landfill. We offer our enthusiastic support for this bill.

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. Through its Zero Waste Project, 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.

I. Organic Waste: Treasure or Trash?

S-2441 is designed to transform compostable organic waste from Rhode Island’s trash to Rhode Island’s treasure.

When diverted from the Central Landfill and composted, organic waste becomes treasure. Treasure to Rhode Island’s cities and towns in the form of immediate reductions in expensive solid waste disposal fees. Treasure to Rhode Island citizens in the form of lower municipal taxes or an increase in other beneficial public services paid for by the reductions in municipal solid waste disposal fees. Treasure to Rhode Island’s soils, which can grow healthier and more nutritious plants and food; have better water holding capacity and water infiltration; be more resilient to drought and extreme weather; and better prevent erosion and runoff, thus protecting and restoring waterways. Treasure to our environment in the form of reduced methane emissions

and more robust carbon sequestration, significantly helping Rhode Island meet its Act on Climate commitments.¹

If dumped in the landfill, the organic waste is trashed as municipal solid waste. Continued trashing of organic waste will shorten the life of the Central Landfill; increase municipal solid waste disposal fees; increase property taxes to Rhode Island citizens or cause a reduction in beneficial public services; substantially contribute to climate change in the form of increased methane emissions; and further deplete the health and resilience of our soils.

II. A Funding Program with Many Carrots and One Important Stick

S-2441 establishes a two dollar per ton surcharge on solid waste processed by a refuse disposal system (e.g., the Central Landfill).² This surcharge must be paid by the individual or entity disposing of solid waste at a refuse disposal system, which includes municipally contracted waste haulers.³ **A municipality must opt in to applying this surcharge.** However, “municipalities that do not opt in to the fee program shall not be eligible for the municipal waste diversion grant fund...”⁴

A municipality that opts in can avoid this surcharge by adopting measures that lessen the amount of organic waste it ultimately dumps at the Central Landfill. Economic forecasts developed by The Rhode Island Food Policy Council (“RIFPC”) indicate that a municipality can avoid any negative financial effect from this surcharge by diverting approximately seven percent of its organic waste from the Central Landfill to composting operations. Moreover, municipalities will be eligible to participate in the above-referenced municipal waste diversion grants to fund the development and implementation of activities that advance food waste prevention, food rescue and recovery, composting, or minimize illegal dumping in the state.⁵ The Institute for Local Self-Reliance (“ISLR”) highlights eight different states and two counties that allocate revenue from waste disposal surcharges to fund waste diversion, reuse, recycling, composting, and other sustainability efforts. As noted by ISLR, a per-ton surcharge on waste landfilled has “a proven track record of raising funds to reduce and recycle waste.”⁶

The RIFPC projects that approximately \$1.2 million dollars per year will be raised by this surcharge, all of which must be deposited into a Compost Fund, which is to be administered by DEM.⁷ Five percent of the Compost Fund is available to cover its administrative costs, as well as

¹ R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-6.2-9.

² See Senate Bill 2441 at § 42-6.3-4.

³ See *id.*

⁴ See *id.*

⁵ See Senate Bill 2441 § 42-6.3-8.

⁶ See *Surcharges on Waste Disposal Fund Composting*, ISLR (Feb. 4, 2022), available at <https://ilsr.org/disposal-surcharges-fund-composting/>.

⁷ See *id.* at § 42-6.3-5.

the two grant funds established by S-2441.⁸ The remaining amount of the Compost Fund shall be divided equally between a Municipal Waste Diversion Grant Fund⁹ and a Competitive Composting and Waste Diversion Grant Fund.¹⁰ The purpose of the Composting and Waste Diversion Grant Fund is to award grants to eligible entities to assist with the costs of developing and implementing compost production, compost use, and waste diversion efforts.¹¹ In this regard, S-2441 mandates that DEM give priority to projects that, among other criteria, are led by low-income, socially disadvantaged, beginning, small, women, or veteran entities, organizations, and businesses.¹²

In short, S-2441 represents a painless, innovative set of policies that will permanently benefit Rhode Island and its municipalities, citizens, and environment. We therefore ask that you support passage of S-2441.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this testimony.

Respectfully submitted,



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Senior Attorney, Rhode Island
Conservation Law Foundation

cc: Members of the Senate Finance Committee
Senator Bridget Valverde
Senator Meghan E. Kallman
Senator Pamela J. Lauria
Senator Dawn Euer
Senator Mark McKenney
Senator Victoria Gu
Senator Samuel W. Bell
Senator Tiara T. Mack
Darrèll Brown, Vice President, Rhode Island, Conservation Law Foundation

⁸ *See id.*

⁹ *See id.* at § 42-6.3-7.

¹⁰ *See id.* at § 42-6.3-6.

¹¹ *See id.*

¹² *See id.*