



April 28th, 2026

Dear Chairman DiPalma and Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

I'm writing on behalf of the Rhode Island Food Policy Council and our members regarding **SB2441: Compost and Organic Diversion Act**. We strongly support this bill and our members have chosen it as one of our top priorities this year in addressing the food system.

The current system we have for waste in RI is **neither financially nor environmentally sustainable**. Municipalities currently pay an artificially low rate of nearly half the true cost of their waste and that of our neighbors. Meanwhile the gas in the landfill, primarily from compostable items is the third largest source of methane emissions in our country.

After a year-long process the Council recently completed and released the [Wasted Food Solutions Action Plan for Rhode Island](#). Not surprisingly the top priority was funding. We have tremendous companies working on reducing food waste, rescuing and gleaning surplus food for donation, for-profit and non-profit composters all working hard to create the system the state needs but they need funding – the type of funding that has been provided over many years to our landfill and waste systems – in order to do the work the state needs them to do. This is the bill to do that.

For many reasons we believe this is a very well written bill. First we understand that this is a tough fiscal time for the state. However, the bill **does not require any additional funding from the state's budget**.

Second, it **places the burden and the opportunity with those who generate the most waste**. By tying the fees to the waste that is generated you only pay more if you waste more, and consequently you have the opportunity to reduce your fees if you waste less. Not only that but the funds raised by the bill go directly back to trying to reduce the fees charged and helping solve the problem.

We've made a change this year to the bill to allow municipalities to opt-in to the surcharge rather than automatically charge it. This will allow municipalities to plan accordingly. We believe that they will choose to opt-in because they know their waste rates are going to skyrocket in the near future and this is a way to address those costs. We also have an opportunity to provide private funding to incentivize opt-ins so it's imperative that we pass this legislation to make that

opportunity available. With these changes the League of Cities and Towns has expressed strong support for this bill.

Third, it is not overly prescriptive in nature. It sends 50% of the fees back the municipalities and the other 50% to competitive grants and then it allows the municipalities and the entities I mentioned above to use the **best and most efficient solutions to meet the problem**. Currently a nonprofit run program in New Shoreham is composting on the island because of the logistics of transporting food waste. We need to support their efforts and grow the existing program. Meanwhile, Providence has a system of drop-offs and hauling organizations that process the material, some in the community and some nearby. These organizations will be able to grow and use the most efficient methods by applying for these funds.

Passing this bill will also help us **address food and nutrition security** in our state. The RI Life Index measured 38% of the state facing food insecurity. Over a third of the state. Frankly this is unacceptable. And with the cuts coming at the federal level from the current administration to food programs it may only get worse. Funding opportunities that will save and donate perfectly good food is a cost effective way to put a dent into this issue.

Other members like CET provide **technical assistance to businesses** to help them understand how they can put in place systems to make the donations easy. So there are fantastic organizations ready and able to make this all work and now they need your help to make it happen.

As our landfill is slated to close in 2046 the question we have to ask is: *does the state of Rhode Island want to gradually take on that cost on its own terms, or be forced to do so later on?* Do we want to take the future in our hands and address the problem on our own terms, or do we wait and hope costs won't skyrocket out of control as we fight our neighbors for ever shrinking waste disposal options? Unfortunately, we all know that without action – they will.

Thank you for your consideration,

Isaac Bearg

Program Director - Food, Climate & Environment

Rhode Island Food Policy Council