

Committee on Children JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-1046

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING THE REDUCTION OF FOOD WASTE IN SCHOOLS.

Vote Date: 2/28/2023

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/21/2023

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Committee on Children.

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill seeks to reduce the amount of food waste produced in schools by including school districts among those responsible for composting organic material and permitting schools to establish composting stations in cafeterias.

This bill intends to create composting stations within schools that allow for students to have a more hands on approach to food composting. It teaches kids how to better care for their environment and provides critical learning experience for their future. Schools within a 20 mile radiance of authorized source-separated organic material composting facility and generates not less than 140 tons of material per year must participate in an organic waste separating program. This will reduce food waste in our schools and help grow our environment by increasing the participants in this program.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

State of Connecticut State Department of Education, Commissioner, Charlene M. Russell-Tucker, recognizes the value of composting as both practical an even educational. However, raises concerns on the potential costs that may be significant towards local schools. They also want to raise awareness that the current DEEP Food Waste Composting Facilities may not have capacity to take on this initiative. They also believe this will have a negative impact on children's nutrition because they will want to compost their fruits and veggies instead of consuming them.

Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection, Commissioner, Katie Dykes, supports this bill and adds that it builds on DEEPs work including outreach with schools to help recognize ways to reduce waste. DEEP already has existing guidelines on management of food scraps that could be applied to any school in the state.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Connecticut General Assembly, Representative Moira Rader, supports this bill and its work to deal with the food waste problem of the state. This bill will help our students better understand their impact on the environment. More specifically, the language of the bill that develops guidelines towards implementing composting station programs in schools is encouraging.

Waste Free Greenwich, Julie DeChamps, has suggestions for SB-1046:

1. Remove the 20-mile limitation as this would exempt far too many schools from the program. Instead, Governor Lamont has proposed, "an authorized transfer station or other collection location that collects source separated organics materials."
2. They have worked on a pilot program in Greenwich schools that has resulted in a 73% food waste diversion, with food scraps composing 40% of cafeteria waste.
3. Suggests using the miniature liquor bottle revenues as a source of revenue for organic diversion efforts.

Sustainable Trumbull, Mary Isaac, Mari Jackson, April Lang, Kevin Malone Pam Roman, support this bill as we see a high amount of organic waste being created at schools and with this bill the children will have a more hands on and be able to positively affect their community. They do suggest a change to the 20-mile specified distance writing found in the bill:

1. Expand the requirements set by the Commercial Organics Recycling Law as to collect organic waste from hospitality, entertainment, college, and university sectors.
2. Apply to commercial generators that are located within 20 miles of an authorized transfer station or other collection locations rather than just composting facilities.

Office of Curbside Compost, Nick Skeadas, supports this bill and its goal of reducing food waste in schools. They recognize the vast amount of food waste (22% of or waste is food waste). Getting schools to reduce food waste is crucial.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Nutrition Association of CT Public Policy & Legislation Committee, Co-Chair, Jeff Sidewater, opposes this bill as they feel it is well intentioned but would be too costly and difficult to put these proposals into practice. The current resources available are not sufficient and this bill would simply result in an unfunded mandate.

Connecticut Association of School Business Officials, Director of Government Affairs, David Lenihan, opposes this bill because although well intentioned bears a heavy financial burden on certain school districts who may implement this program. Instead, he suggests providing grant funding for pilot programs that schools can opt into on a voluntary basis.

School Nutrition Association of Connecticut, President, Erin Perpetua, opposes this bill and adds that Connecticut schools are very aware of food waste and have taken many efforts over the years to reduce waste. They say that this bill will introduce programs that will be both costly on schools and be extremely difficult to manage.

Reported by: Christian Talarski

Date: 3/13/23