

March 29, 2023



Minnesota Senate
Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee

Re: SF2438 A3 – Environment & Climate Omnibus Bill

Dear Chair Hawj and Members of the Committee,

As a social enterprise recycler, we hold a clear and bold vision for a world without waste, we use our on-the-ground experience to advocate for tangible, real-world solutions to better manage our resources, reduce waste, support local economies, and build healthy, equitable communities.

We appreciate the addition of a number of policies and initiatives in the Omnibus bill that address our climate and waste crisis, including:

Frontline Community Protection Act (Section 55): The impacts of pollution have been disproportionately forced on overburdened communities for decades, leading to numerous environmental, health, economic, and social disparities. This issue is systemic, and we must address it with systemic change. There are environmental justice communities all across the state. No overburdened community should continue having pollution forced upon them.

Expanding Use of Solid Waste Management Projects to Include Waste Reduction and Reuse (Section 48): When addressing our waste crisis, priority must be given to infrastructure investments and activities that drive source reduction and create systems for reuse.

However, additional investments need to be made to move Minnesota toward a zero-waste future. Our climate crisis is directly correlated with an economy that supports linear consumption over circularity. According to the EPA, 40% of our greenhouse gas emissions come from linear consumption – producing, transporting, using, and disposing a material good.ⁱ With proactive legislative action, we can prevent this waste. According to the MPCA, nearly two-thirds of what is landfilled and burned in Minnesota could be reduced, reused, recycled, or composted with improved infrastructure.ⁱⁱ

The systems of single use packaging and linear consumption and waste are well established, and it is critical that we support opportunities to invest in and build out the alternatives. We ask that the following initiatives, which were included in the House Environment and Natural Resources Omnibus bill (HF2310 DE1), be included once the bill moves to conference committee.

Zero Waste Grant Program (Section 12 of HF2310 DE1): Amid historic supply chain disruptions, the intensifying climate crisis, and rampant plastic pollution, there has never been a more important time to invest in a circular economy for Minnesotans that prioritizes reduction and reuse. Investments in Zero Waste infrastructure are investments in a resilient

statewide economy, a healthier environment, and stable supply chains for Minnesota manufacturers. The systems of single use packaging and linear consumption and waste are well established, and it is critical that we support opportunities to invest in and build out the alternatives. This bill creates a grant program for small businesses, non-profits, and local governments to overcome start-up barriers and support their efforts to create reuse systems, reduce waste, and contribute to a circular economy.

Path to Zero Waste Report (Section 57 of HF2310 DE1): The state needs a comprehensive plan for achieving zero waste. This proposed study, informed by Zero Waste experts and Environmental Justice communities, will provide crucial insights into our current municipal solid waste management system and help identify the necessary steps to transition to a zero waste economy.

Compostable Labeling (Section 39 of HF2310 DE1): Counties and cities across Minnesota are increasingly developing composting facilities and diversion programs to meet our urgent climate change goals. The success of public and private programs and composting operations is dependent on reducing contamination. This bill provides much needed standards for compostable product labeling, which will reduce operational costs for composters; reduce confusion of food establishments who accidentally buy misleading products from manufacturers, distributors and wholesalers; reduce confusion for residents participating in organics recycling programs; support compostable product manufacturers in the State, and elsewhere, who already clearly label products.

Investing in a Zero Waste infrastructure and supporting policies that aim to address our plastic pollution crisis will result in a more sustainable economy and healthier environment for Minnesotans. We thank you for your leadership on these issues and ask that you support these policies as they move to conference committee. Please feel free to contact us with questions or for further information.

Sincerely,



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ⁱ <https://www.epa.gov/smm/resources-waste-and-climate-change>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/air-water-land-climate/understanding-solid-waste>