

April 8, 2024



Minnesota Senate
Environment, Climate and Legacy Committee

Re: Organics Collection Grant Program (SF5258 -Senator McEwan)

Dear Chair Hawj and Members of the Committee,

Eureka Recycling is committed to advancing zero waste solutions in Minnesota. Getting organics out of the waste stream is a key strategy and SF5258 can help us get there.

We are a non-profit, social enterprise, recycler here in the Twin Cities. We work to demonstrate that recycling can and should be done in ways that benefit our environment, communities, and the regional economy.

We are proud to have partnered with the City of Saint Paul almost 20- years ago to develop and service one of the first organized collection recycling programs for multifamily residential buildings in the country, ensuring all Saint Paul residents had equitable access to this important service. We also piloted commercial organics collection in the Twin Cities, partnering with local restaurants to demonstrate that composting collection offers opportunity for big environmental benefit and costs savings at the same time.

What we found from our multi-family recycling programs and our commercial organics collection pilot was that if you give people access to these services, they will use them. People want to make the right decision when it comes to their waste - what they need is the opportunity to do so.

According to a 2021 [Food Waste Generation and Composition Study](#) Analysis by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, an average of 25.1% of mixed municipal solid waste from across the state is food and compostable paper and packaging. And currently, nearly [30% of Minnesota residents](#) - more than 620,700 households live in a rental unit. Compostables are a significant portion of our trash, and households living in multifamily are a big percentage of our population - they deserve access to this waste reduction service and can be a big part of the solution.

Equitable access is not only important for the environment and people's ability to proactively participate in climate solutions, but it also supports economic equitable policy. Food waste is mostly water, making it quite heavy. Given that waste is taxed at a high rate, apartment owners will save on diverting their organic waste into the compost bin.

Finally, as a state, we need equitable access to organics programs to meet our goals. The combined recycling and composting rate in the state has remained stagnant over the last decade - at around 45%. This is far less than the state's goal of achieving a 75% recycling and composting rate by 2030. If we are to meet this goal, we need to make sure everyone has equitable access to recycling and composting services. People living in multifamily dwellings like apartment complexes have been largely left out. SF5258 will provide much needed funding to support the development of organics collection programs and composting education in multi-family residences.

We are happy to provide additional information on this issue and appreciate your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,



Lucy Mullany
Director of Policy & Advocacy, Eureka Recycling
lucym@eurekarecycling.org
www.eurekarecycling.org