

Re: Language to expand the State's Compostable Plastic Bag Labeling law to apply to all food or beverage products and packaging claiming to be compostable.

Greetings,

I am writing in support of this proposed legislation. Before retiring from WLSSD (Western Lake Superior Sanitary District) 3 years ago, I spent more than 15 years working to divert organics from the waste stream for beneficial reuse.

Our region has a strong history of leading the way with programs that promote waste reduction and recover value from materials traditionally discarded as "waste". WLSSD's organics ordinance was the first in the US, and the district's novel organics drop site program was also the first in the US. Thousands of tons of food scraps from residents, institutions, and businesses have been successfully captured for composting in our region, thanks to the ordinance and the organics program that were developed with the assistance of state grant funding.

The state's original compostable bag labeling legislation played a huge role in ensuring that food scraps accepted for composting at industrial compost sites, such as WLSSD's, were not enclosed in regular plastic bags masquerading as "biodegradable" (NOT the same as "compostable".)

The passage of that law was a game changer for Minnesota's compost industry and waste reduction programs. It removed a barrier that had confounded the best-planned programs and offered protection to residents and businesses alike.

Before that law was passed, many of those early food scrap bags, purchased by well-meaning restaurants, schools, haulers, hospitals, and local governments, merely shattered into tiny pieces of plastic that persisted through the compost process and into the finished compost product, rendering it undesirable, and in some cases, unusable.

We are faced with similar challenges with to-go food service wares, utensils, straws, cups, etc. As organics recovery programs have expanded and matured, more and more post-consumer food residuals can be captured, but not if the food scraps are contaminated with material that is not truly compostable. This legislation protects against green-washing by unscrupulous manufacturers, marketers, and vendors, and it protects those unsuspecting retailers and wholesalers who are trying to do the right thing but must rely on their suppliers to provide them with genuine compostable goods, purchased in good faith and with trust in labeling.

Thank you for helping our state close the loop through food scrap recovery and recycling into clean, high-quality compost that enriches and restores our soils and sequesters carbon.

This expanded legislation will greatly help that effort by protecting the consumers who purchase serveware products as well as the growing compost industry and their customers who seek to purchase high quality compost for growing food and restoring the landscape.

Please support this legislation; it is sound, effective, and reasonable.

Thank you,
Susan Darley-Hill
Duluth, MN