

March 9, 2021

Representative Zack Stephenson  
Chair, House Commerce Finance and Policy Committee  
407 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: Support for HF 1165

Dear Chair Stephenson,

The Partnership on Waste and Energy is a Joint Powers Board formed by Hennepin, Ramsey and Washington counties to address waste management and energy issues. We support initiatives that build on the state's waste hierarchy to reduce waste and to create a sustainable, circular economy that keeps products and materials in use and restores natural systems. We are writing today to support HF 1165, authored by Representative Wazlawik.

Landfills in the metro area are nearing capacity, making efforts to reduce and recover materials from trash increasingly urgent. Forty-six percent of Minnesota's waste was diverted from trash through recycling and organics recovery in 2018. The metro area has a statutory goal to divert 75% of waste from trash by 2030. Since organics comprise approximately 25% of the region's trash, success in achieving this goal requires significantly increasing the diversion of organics. Organics recycling also represents a major opportunity to reduce greenhouse gases from waste.

Minnesota's plastic bag labeling standards law (Minnesota Statutes Section 325E.046) currently states that any bag labeled as "compostable" or "biodegradable" may not be sold in Minnesota unless they meet a science-based standard. The Partnership supports expanding the statute to apply to all food or beverage products and packaging, establishing certification requirements for composability claims and requiring clear identification of products claiming to be certified as compostable.

Working to eliminate confusion for consumers, food establishments, recyclers and composting processors about the compostability of products is critical to helping counties achieve our statutory mandate. Currently, products can be labeled with terms such as "biodegradable" that lead people to think they are compostable, when in fact they are not.

Under the requirements of HF 1165, products that are claimed to be compostable must be certified compostable in order to be sold or distributed in the state. Third-party certification, such as through the Biodegradable Products Institute (BPI), whose certification process is the most highly regarded in the composting industry, assures consumers and compost site operators that products will properly compost.

RE: Support for H.F. 1165

Helping compost sites produce quality compost is key to closing the loop on organics recycling. Local composters need organic material free of contamination to consistently produce marketable end products for landscaping, road construction and garden projects. HF 1165 is an important step toward achieving sustainable organics recycling by giving consumers clear information on what products are truly compostable so organic material delivered to compost sites is clean and ready to compost.

Let me close with specific examples of why HF 1165 is important.

- Hennepin County required the City of Minneapolis to begin curbside organics recycling in 2015, and St Louis Park added curbside organics collection in 2014. The county then revised its solid waste ordinance in 2018 requiring certain commercial generators of organics to have a food waste recycling program starting in 2020. The ordinance also requires cities to offer new residential organics curbside recycling programs in 2022. By 2019, 40 percent of all organics collected in the county was delivered to the Brooklyn Park Transfer Station because of a county subsidy to spur development of organics collection.
- Ramsey and Washington counties, through Ramsey/Washington Recycling and Energy, are investing \$7 million of state bonding funds from the 2020 legislative session in a \$42 million upgrade of its Recycling and Energy Center. This will allow, among other things, for the roll-out of curbside organics collection for residents and businesses in the two counties starting in 2022.

The increasing number of businesses and residents involved in these programs will have more confidence in what materials they can divert from trash with labeling requirements like those established in HF 1165.

Thank you for considering HF 1165. We strongly support passage of this bill as an important tool for the region and the state to more easily achieve statutory recycling and waste diversion goals.

Sincerely,



Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt, Ramsey County  
Chair, Partnership on Waste and Energy

cc: Adeline Miller, Committee Administrator  
Commissioner Debbie Goettel, Hennepin County  
Commissioner Fran Miron, Washington County