

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 6168

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to school composting and recycling.

Brief Description: Concerning school composting and recycling.

Sponsors: Senators Kuderer, Mullet, Hunt and Liias.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/20/18, 2/22/18 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows public schools to offer students the opportunity to recycle and to compost their food waste.
- Permits the state to provide to schools free pickup of compost and provide free composting supplies if needed.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Dolan, Vice Chair; Stonier, Vice Chair; Muri, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Johnson, Kilduff, Lovick, Ortiz-Self, Senn, Slatter, Steele and Valdez.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Harris, Ranking Minority Member; Hargrove and McCaslin.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Caldier and Stokesbary.

Staff: Katie Choate (786-7296) and Ethan Moreno (786-7386).

Background:

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Washington cities and counties are responsible for regulating recycling and composting collection and disposal. Cities and counties are not required to directly provide these services due to a variation in waste service availability across the state. Each city and county is required to have a comprehensive solid waste management plan that includes, among other things, guidelines for the handling and proper preparation of materials for reuse or recycling and organic materials for composting or anaerobic digestion.

The Department of Ecology, the Department of Agriculture (WSDA), and the Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC) must review local solid waste management plans. The WSDA reviews preliminary draft plans for compliance with state laws regarding insect, pests, and plant diseases. The UTC reviews preliminary draft plans to assess the cost of solid waste collection and its impacts on rates charged by regulated solid waste collection companies. Once approved, each local solid waste management plan must be reviewed and revised periodically.

The United States Department of Education and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction encourage schools through their Green Ribbon awards to: (1) reduce environmental impact and costs; (2) improve the health and wellness of schools, students, and staff; and (3) provide effective environmental and sustainability education by incorporating science, technology, engineering and math, civic skills, and green career pathways.

The Washington Green Schools Program (Green Schools) is a nonprofit organization that offers a certification system for schools. Green Schools provides educational resources to help school staff, students, and communities achieve sustainability goals. There are currently 514 participating schools in the state.

Summary of Bill:

All public schools are allowed to offer students the opportunity to recycle and to compost their food waste. School districts may provide on-site composting or may contract with the local waste management company. The state is permitted to provide free pickup of compost and provide composting supplies for all public schools as needed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The idea for this bill came from students, and it will allow schools to opt in to a composting program. There is a significant difference between this bill and the composting bill from last year. The bill from last year mandated composting programs for all public schools, but this bill encourages schools to compost. This bill will have a positive impact statewide for the environment and students.

With the environmental effects of climate change this bill is more important than ever. Climate change is fueled by greenhouse gas and other factors, and when waste ends up in landfills it releases methane into the air which contributes to climate change and the heating of the planet. Because of methane's short life span, if schools were to commit to composting it would have long term benefits. There is also an educational aspect of bringing awareness about climate change, especially since future students will be affected by climate change the most.

Composting programs at some high schools are run and led by students. Also, student clubs can earn community service hours by participating in composting programs.

Schools in some areas of the state provide complimentary composting with the regular trash collections. Under the bill, schools would not increase garbage or costs, they would simply redistribute the costs and sort their garbage into the correct bins.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Lauren Peterson; Yael Pasumansky; Megan Johnson; and Christina Brandao.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.