

LC004094

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

A N A C T

RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY -- ORGANICS DIVERSION AT CATERED  
EVENTS ACT

Introduced By: Representatives Carson, Spears, Cotter, McGaw, Cortvriend, and  
Speakman

Date Introduced: February 12, 2026

Referred To: House Environment and Natural Resources

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Legislative findings and purpose.

2 The general assembly finds that food waste constitutes thirteen percent (13%) of carbon  
3 emissions in the State of Rhode Island; that the Act on Climate strategic report issued in December  
4 of 2025 targets the reduction of food waste through composting; that one-third of the waste in the  
5 Johnston land fill is food waste; that food waste generated at catered events constitutes a significant  
6 portion of the solid waste stream; that composting and other forms of organic waste diversion  
7 reduce disposal costs, conserve landfill capacity, and provide environmental benefits; and that  
8 catered events present unique compliance challenges due to their temporary and mobile nature.

9 The purpose of this act is to ensure effective diversion of food waste at larger catered events  
10 through the creation of annual diversion plans, requiring food recovery at large catered events, and  
11 requiring caterer collaboration with compost service providers.

12 SECTION 2. Title 23 of the General Laws entitled "HEALTH AND SAFETY" is hereby  
13 amended by adding thereto the following chapter:

14 CHAPTER 18.20

15 ORGANICS DIVERSION AT CATERED EVENTS ACT

16 23-18.20-1. Short title.

17 This chapter shall be known and may be cited as the “Organics Diversion at Catered Events  
18 Act.”

1           **23-18.20-2. Definitions.**

2           As used in this chapter:

3           (1) "Annual diversion plan" means the written statement submitted annually by the caterer  
4 to the department of environmental management outlining its food waste diversion plan, identifying  
5 its compost service provider, and acknowledging its obligation to compost food waste from catered  
6 events.

7           (2) "Caterer" means any person, firm, or corporation engaged in the business of preparing  
8 or providing food and beverage service at events or locations other than a fixed, licensed food  
9 establishment.

10          (3) "Compost service provider" means a solid waste hauler that collects organic food waste  
11 from homes and/or businesses to divert waste from landfills.

12          (4) "Covered event" means any event at which a caterer serves or prepares food for fifty  
13 (50) or more meals, whether held on public or private property.

14          (5) "Diversion" means the separation of organic materials from solid waste for the purpose  
15 of composting, anaerobic digestion, or other lawful organic recycling as regulated by the  
16 department of health and/or department of environmental management.

17          (6) "Food recovery" means the collection of surplus food, including: unopened,  
18 prepackaged, shelf stable items; wrapped fruits and vegetables with a thick skin; and unopened,  
19 prepackaged perishable food items, provided a temperature controlled mechanism is in place to  
20 maintain a safe temperature for food items.

21           **23-18.20-3. Applicability.**

22           (a) This chapter shall apply to all caterers operating at a covered event.

23           (b) This chapter shall not apply to:

24           (1) Private, noncommercial events held at a private residence; or

25           (2) Events for which no food waste is generated.

26           **23-18.20-4. Annual diversion plan required.**

27           (a) No caterer shall operate at a covered event unless an annual diversion plan has been  
28 filed in accordance with this section.

29           (b) Acknowledgment of receipt of an annual diversion plan by the department of  
30 environmental management shall not constitute approval of the plan, endorsement of its contents,  
31 or a determination of compliance with environmental laws or regulations.

32           (c) The department of environmental management shall create the annual diversion plan  
33 form, which shall require caterers to provide, at a minimum:

34           (1) A description of the food waste and organic materials expected to be generated;

- 1           (2) The method by which such materials will be source-separated at the event;
- 2           (3) The name of the compost service provider that the caterer has engaged; and
- 3           (4) A description of collection containers and procedures to be used at covered events.

4           **23-18.20-5. Recordkeeping.**

5           (a) Each caterer subject to this chapter shall maintain records demonstrating compliance  
6 with the annual diversion plan including, but not limited to, receipts, weight estimates, or service  
7 invoices.

8           (b) Records shall be retained for a period of three (3) years and shall be made available  
9 upon request to the department of environmental management.

10          **23-18.20-6. Enforcement.**

11          (a) The department of environmental management, in coordination with the department of  
12 health may audit records and investigate compliance with this chapter.

13          (b) Any caterer who fails to submit the annual diversion plan shall be subject to a civil  
14 penalty not exceeding five hundred dollars (\$500).

15          **23-18.20-7. Regulations.**

16          The department of environmental management, in consultation with the department of  
17 health, may promulgate rules and regulations necessary to implement the provisions of this chapter.

18          SECTION 3. This act shall take effect on January 1, 2027, and shall apply to covered events  
19 permitted on or after that date.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
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RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY -- ORGANICS DIVERSION AT CATERED  
EVENTS ACT

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- 1           This act would create the "Organics Diversion at Catered Events Act" to require caterers
- 2   to submit an annual diversion plan for food and organic waste to the department of environmental
- 3   management for approval prior to permitting for covered events.
- 4           This act would take effect on January 1, 2027, and would apply to covered events permitted
- 5   on or after that date.

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