

2026 -- S 2438 SUBSTITUTE A

LC004754/SUB A

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- SCHOOL WASTE RECYCLING AND REFUSE DISPOSAL

Introduced By: Senators Valverde, Kallman, Lauria, Euer, DiPalma, McKenney,
DiMario, Gu, Mack, and Vargas

Date Introduced: February 06, 2026

Referred To: Senate Environment & Agriculture

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Sections 16-111-1, 16-111-2, 16-111-4, 16-111-5 and 16-111-7 of the
2 General Laws in Chapter 16-111 entitled "School Waste Recycling and Refuse Disposal" are
3 hereby amended to read as follows:

4 **16-111-1. Definitions.**

5 As used in this chapter.

6 (1) "Educational entity" or "educational entities" means all Rhode Island school districts,
7 including a single school district, regional school district, multiple school districts, any public or
8 private school grades kindergarten through twelve (K-12), any charter public school, or any career
9 and technical high school.

10 (2) "Sharing table" means a department of health-approved designated location in a school
11 cafeteria where students or staff can place:

12 (i) Unopened, prepackaged, shelf stable items including, but not limited to, granola bars,
13 cereal packs, crackers, and drinks;

14 (ii) Wrapped fruit and vegetables and fruits with a thick skin including, but not limited to,
15 bananas, oranges, and washed apples; provided that, the peel is intact; and

16 (iii) Unopened, prepackaged perishable food items; provided that, a temperature control
17 mechanism is in place to maintain a safe temperature for the food items.

18 ~~(2)~~(3) "Waste audit" means an analysis of a facility's waste stream. The audit can identify
19 what types of recyclable materials and waste a facility generates; how much of each category is

1 recovered for recycling or discarded; and what materials can be composted.

2 **16-111-2. Waste audit/report.**

3 (a) On or after January 1, 2022, and every three (3) years thereafter, every educational
4 entity shall coordinate and cooperate with the Rhode Island resource recovery corporation (RIRRC)
5 for the purpose of conducting school waste audits. These audits shall produce waste management
6 reports that shall be collected, maintained, and delivered to the educational entity. The waste audits
7 shall be performed at every educational entity.

8 (b) Waste audits and any reports required herein shall include guidelines and strategies on
9 reducing waste for each educational entity to incorporate into its food waste reduction and
10 recycling programs in an effort to eliminate food waste, promote recycling, and provide food to
11 local communities.

12 (c) Educational entities, using the guidelines and strategies pursuant to subsection (b), shall
13 design and implement a waste collection system in accordance with applicable state law for the
14 diversion of items including, but not limited to, paper, books, furniture, computers, office supplies,
15 plastic, glass, cardboard, and surplus foods.

16 (d) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any waste audit conducted pursuant to this
17 section shall be provided free of charge by the RIRRC.

18 [\(e\) Effective January 1, 2027, and every three \(3\) years thereafter, educational entities shall](#)
19 [report the results of any waste audit conducted pursuant to this section to the commissioner of the](#)
20 [Rhode Island department of education who shall publish the results of the audit on the department](#)
21 [website.](#)

22 **16-111-4. Food service — Local sources preferred.**

23 It shall be the policy of the state, the department of education, and any educational entity
24 to ~~encourage~~ [require](#) that any request for proposal (RFP) [or invitation for bid \(IFB\)](#) to a food service
25 company (vendor) to provide food services to an educational entity encourage the use of a vendor
26 that purchases ten percent (10%) of the required food service product from a Rhode Island-based
27 food service company. In addition, it shall also be the policy of the state, the department of
28 education, and any educational entity, to ~~encourage the~~ [only](#) use ~~of~~ vendors who recycle organic-
29 waste materials at an authorized composting facility, an anaerobic digestion facility, or by another
30 authorized recycling method, regardless of whether the entity purchasing the services is or is not
31 an educational entity, or a covered entity or a covered educational institution pursuant to the
32 provisions of § 23-18.9-7.

33 **16-111-5. Food donations by food service companies.**

34 (a) It shall be the policy of the state, the department of education, and any educational entity

1 to require that any request for proposal (RFP) to select a food service company (vendor) to provide
2 food services to an educational entity shall require the vendor to donate any unserved nonperishable
3 or unspoiled perishable food to local food banks or the Rhode Island Food Bank in accordance with
4 the recommendations from the Rhode Island department of health “The Road to End Hunger”
5 initiative.

6 (b) Vendors required to donate nonperishable and unspoiled perishable food to local food
7 banks or the Rhode Island Food Bank shall initially make arrangements for the provision
8 accommodations necessary to carry out the provisions of this section.

9 (c) Except for injury resulting from gross negligence or intentional misconduct in the
10 preparation or handling of donated food, no educational entity, person, or vendor who or that
11 donates food that is fit for human consumption at the time it was donated, as required by subsection
12 (a), shall be liable for any damage or injury resulting from the consumption of the donated food.

13 (d) The immunity from civil liability provided by this section applies regardless of
14 compliance with any laws, regulations, or ordinances regulating the packaging or labeling of food,
15 and regardless of compliance with any laws, regulations, or ordinances regulating the storage or
16 handling of the food by the donee after the donation of the food. The donation of nonperishable
17 food that is fit for human consumption but that has exceeded the labeled shelf life date
18 recommended by the manufacturer is protected pursuant to this section. The donation of perishable
19 food that is fit for human consumption but that has exceeded the labeled shelf life date
20 recommended by the manufacturer is protected pursuant to this section if the person who
21 distributes the food to the end recipient makes a good faith evaluation that the food to be donated
22 is wholesome.

23 (e) The local food bank or Rhode Island Food Bank that, in good faith, receives and
24 distributes food without charge, pursuant to subsection (a), that is fit for human consumption at the
25 time it was distributed is not liable for any injury or death due to the food unless the injury or death
26 is a direct result of the gross negligence or intentional misconduct of the organization.

27 (f) Vendors pursuant to subsection (a) of this section shall provide an annual report to the
28 Rhode Island department of education on a form prepared by the department, detailing the amount
29 of unserved nonperishable or unspoiled perishable food donated pursuant to subsection (a) of this
30 section and shall also provide information relative to any tax deduction or credit utilized by the
31 vendor due to donations made pursuant to this section. Information required by this subsection shall
32 be published on the RIDE website.

33 **16-111-7. Rules and regulations.**

34 The commissioner is hereby ~~authorized~~ directed to promulgate whatever rules and

1 regulations may be required to implement this chapter and shall annually provide notice to all
2 educational entities of the department's school waste disposal and refuse disposal policies. [The](#)
3 [rules and regulations required pursuant to this section shall be promulgated no later than January](#)
4 [1, 2027.](#)

5 SECTION 2. Chapter 16-111 of the General Laws entitled "School Waste Recycling and
6 Refuse Disposal" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following section:

7 **16-111-8. Share tables.**

8 [\(a\) An educational entity may do both of the following to minimize waste and to reduce](#)
9 [food insecurity:](#)

10 [\(1\) Provide sharing tables where food service staff, students, and faculty may return](#)
11 [appropriate food items and make those food items available to students during the course of a](#)
12 [regular school meal time.](#)

13 [\(2\) Allow the food placed on the sharing tables that is not taken by a student during the](#)
14 [course of a regular school meal time in accordance with subsection \(a\)\(1\) of this section to be](#)
15 [donated to a food bank or any other nonprofit charitable organization.](#)

16 [\(b\) Donations of food or food made available to students during the course of a regular](#)
17 [school meal time pursuant to this section may include prepackaged food with the packaging still](#)
18 [intact and in good condition, whole uncut produce that is packaged and/or wrapped or has a thick](#)
19 [skin or produce providing the skin of the produce is intact before donation, unopened bags of sliced](#)
20 [fruit, unopened containers of milk that are immediately stored in a cooling bin maintained at forty-](#)
21 [one degrees Fahrenheit \(41°F\) or below, and perishable prepackaged food if it is placed in a proper](#)
22 [temperature-controlled environment.](#)

23 [\(c\) When an educational entity makes food available to students during the course of a](#)
24 [regular school meal time or donates food to a food bank or any other nonprofit charitable](#)
25 [organization for distribution, the preparation, safety, and donation of food shall be consistent with](#)
26 [relevant provisions of the Rhode Island food code \(216-RICR-50-10-1\) and approved by the](#)
27 [department of health.](#)

28 SECTION 3. Section 23-18.9-17 of the General Laws in Chapter 23-18.9 entitled "Refuse
29 Disposal" is hereby amended to read as follows:

30 **23-18.9-17. Food waste ban.**

31 (a) On and after January 1, 2016, each covered entity and each covered educational
32 institution shall ensure that the organic-waste materials that are generated by the covered entity or
33 at the covered educational facility are recycled at an authorized composting facility or anaerobic
34 digestion facility or by another authorized recycling method if:

1 (1) The covered entity or covered educational facility generates not less than one hundred
2 four (104) tons per year of organic-waste material; and

3 (2) The covered entity or covered educational facility is located not more than fifteen (15)
4 miles from an authorized composting facility or anaerobic digestion facility with available capacity
5 to accept such material.

6 (b) On and after January 1, 2018, each covered educational institution shall ensure that the
7 organic-waste materials that are generated at the covered educational facility are recycled at an
8 authorized composting facility or anaerobic digestion facility or by another authorized recycling
9 method if:

10 (1) The covered educational facility generates not less than fifty-two (52) tons per year of
11 organic-waste material; and

12 (2) The covered entity or covered educational facility is located not more than fifteen (15)
13 miles from an authorized composting facility or anaerobic digestion facility with available capacity
14 to accept such material.

15 (c) The director shall grant a waiver of the requirements of subsections (a) and (b) upon a
16 showing that the tipping fee charged by the Rhode Island resource recovery corporation for non-
17 contract commercial sector waste is less than the fee charged for organic-waste material by each
18 composting facility or anaerobic digestion facility located within fifteen (15) miles of the covered
19 entity's location.

20 (d) On and after January 1, 2023, until January 1, 2029, each educational entity (as defined
21 in § ~~16-110-1~~ 16-111-1) shall ensure that the organic-waste materials that are generated by the
22 educational entity are recycled at an authorized composting facility or anaerobic digestion facility
23 or by another authorized recycling method if:

24 (1) The educational entity generates not less than thirty (30) tons per year of organic-waste
25 material; and

26 (2) The educational entity is located not more than fifteen (15) miles from an authorized
27 composting facility or anaerobic digestion facility with available capacity to accept such material.

28 (e) On and after January 1, 2029, each educational entity (as defined in § 16-111-1) shall
29 ensure that the organic-waste materials that are generated by the educational entity are recycled at
30 an authorized composting facility or anaerobic digestion facility.

31 SECTION 4. Section 16-22-35 of the General Laws in Chapter 16-22 entitled "Curriculum
32 [See Title 16 Chapter 97 — the Rhode Island Board of Education Act]" is hereby amended to read
33 as follows:

34 **16-22-35. Littering prevention and recycling awareness program.**

1 The department of elementary and secondary education shall, in collaboration with the
2 Rhode Island resource recovery corporation, prescribe a presentation on litter prevention, reducing
3 and reusing materials, and recycling awareness that shall be used to educate every public [school](#)
4 [student including](#), elementary, ~~and~~ middle school [and high school students](#) ~~student~~ within the state
5 on a yearly basis.

6 SECTION 5. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- SCHOOL WASTE RECYCLING AND REFUSE DISPOSAL

1 This act would amend certain provisions relative to school waste recycling and refuse
2 disposal and would require reports of waste audits by educational entities and reports of program
3 participation by vendors. It would also authorize the use of share tables in schools.

4 This act would take effect upon passage.

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