



S.285 and S.287

Senate Natural Resources Committee

Commentary on proposed changes to the Universal Recycling Law

January 29, 2018

Rural Vermont is concerned about a number of proposed changes to the URL in S.285 and S.287.

The Universal Recycling Law - in intent and language - is a very progressive and important piece of legislation affecting a diversity of Vermont sectors, including the VT food and farming systems, our rural economies and livelihoods, and the ecological integrity of our communities. It is important that the intersectional nature of this law and these systems is recognized, and we recommend that the various stakeholders at the governmental level (ANR, VAAF, Dept. of Commerce, Agency of Human Services, etc.) are convened to strategically develop plans for implementing this law successfully over time (growing markets, infrastructure, innovation).

It is critical to not remove materials from the ban on landfill inputs (organics and glass). For reasons of reducing landfill growth, of committing to reasonable approaches to climate change mitigation, supporting innovations in farm viability, and broader economic opportunity and innovation - Rural Vermont urges the Committee to maintain the requirement to remove these items from the landfill stream.

These materials may currently present challenges in their collection, processing, etc - however, there are reasonable solutions and opportunities for addressing these concerns. *It is reasonable to relieve haulers from the requirements to pick-up organics* - organics collection is a specialized industry, and there is substantial market interest in providing these services; *but it is not at all reasonable to remove the requirements on the generators of organics - this is perhaps the most vital part of this legislation*, and the market cannot be relied upon to provide incentives to assure this behavior. Challenges associated with residential drop off can be aided by facilitating an accessible permitting and training process for approving these locations and getting them going.

This is a piece of legislation that will directly and indirectly affect Vermont's food systems and working lands viability. This a significant opportunity for Vermont's farms and working lands communities: feeding hens (reducing feed costs, improving animal nutrition, and reducing imported nutrients in feed - like phosphorous), creating compost and other soil



amendments, producing capturable heat through composting processes for heating infrastructure like greenhouses, facilitating farm viability through these and other opportunities associated with recovering and processing organics. Farms represent viable locations for distributing organics collection and processing more broadly throughout the State - making this more accessible for communities, and community members. Lastly, the State has recognized food rescue and agricultural uses of organics as more valuable (less energy intensive, more cost effective, etc.) than composting - and enlisting the support of other sectors to support this type of recovery is another untapped opportunity.

Thank you for your time and efforts on this important piece of legislation.

Graham Unangst-Rufenacht
Rural Vermont