

Emily Hie

I am commenting in support of implementing mandatory organics collection throughout the state of Washington. As a resident of Whatcom County since 2011, having access to residential organics collection has reduced my landfill contribution by 50-75% each month compared to when I have rented from residences that have not offered this service.

Composting organic waste is a significant step in the direction of healing the climate damage that humans are responsible for: it can have a net reduction on greenhouse gas emissions, improve soil health (which can further sequester carbon and nourish plants, which in turn prevent erosion & protect ecosystem services), and help move us toward a more circular economy that is less resource-intensive.

However, to be able to compost is currently a privilege limited to landowners--even in places like Whatcom County where disposal services offer organics collection bins, it is up to the landowners' personal discretion whether or not they choose to utilize this service. This comes with inherent systemic bias--in 2022, while 69% of white households in WA state were occupied by homeowners, only 32% of black households were occupied by homeowners.

As inflation and other economic factors make it more and more difficult for Millennial residents to own homes, it becomes increasingly difficult for renters to have the agency we desire to dispose of organic waste responsibly. Although I have a master's degree and full time employment making more than the median income, as a single parent who pays student loans, I do not have discretionary income to save to afford a home. Millennials like me want to pass forward the important value of environmental stewardship to our children, but without the infrastructure for it, there is only so much that many residents can do as individuals.

Without larger scale infrastructure for solutions to climate change, hope for our children's future will continue to look dimmer and dimmer. Please do the right thing and support mandates that protect our natural resources. Thank you!