State Representative Julio Cortes, 38th LD (Julio Cortes)

Please see the attached letter for comments on the Organics Management rulemaking. Thank you.

STATE REPRESENTATIVE
38th LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT
JULIO CORTES

State of Washington House of Representatives

EARLY LEARNING & HUMAN SERVICES
VICE CHAIR
APPROPRIATIONS
TECHNOLOGY, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, & VETERANS

December 12, 2025

Mr. Chris Fredley
Rules Coordinator, Department of Ecology
300 Desmond Drive Southeast
Lacey, WA 98503

Dear Mr. Fredley,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Organics Management rulemaking. As a member of the House of Representatives, I was proud to support HB 2301 in 2024 and HB 1799 in 2022 because both measures were designed to reduce organic waste going into landfills, cut methane emissions, and drive better environmental outcomes for communities across Washington.

Composting plays a central role in achieving those goals. It keeps material out of landfills, supports healthy soils, and strengthens our agricultural sector. As we explore and adopt emerging technologies—such as anaerobic digestion, which I greatly support—it is essential that we continue to nurture a strong, sustainable composting industry statewide.

After reviewing the proposed rules, I am concerned that some of the new requirements may unintentionally create barriers for composting facilities rather than supporting the growth and stability of this important industry. Certain elements—such as very strict inbound contamination limits, reductions in allowable inert material, and expanded operational requirements—may need further refinement to ensure they align with the Legislature's intent and with the practical realities these operators face.

Another area that merits attention is the trend away from source separation. Many of our local grocers have done important work to separate packaged food waste so that both packaging and organic material can be properly recycled or composted. This approach has helped us reduce landfill waste while recovering more usable resources. For that reason, I am concerned by emerging practices that encourage commingling food waste with recyclable or non-recyclable packaging. Any shift in this direction risks undermining the progress we have made and may reduce the overall environmental benefit of organics management programs.

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I appreciate that depackaging technology is advancing and can help manage certain heavily packaged products. Vermont's work in this space provides a useful model. I encourage the Department to ensure that depackaging is regulated in a way that supports innovation while still prioritizing clean material streams, strong environmental outcomes, and the broader goals established in HB 2301 and HB 1799.

My goal is to ensure that the final rules strike the right balance—encouraging innovation, supporting our composting and recycling partners, and staying true to the core mission of reducing landfill waste. With thoughtful adjustments, I am confident we can move forward with a framework that strengthens Washington's leadership in sustainable organics management.

Thank you very much for your work on this rulemaking process and for your consideration of these comments. I look forward to continuing to collaborate to ensure the best outcomes for our environment and our communities.

Sincerely,

Rep. Julio Cortes

38th Legislative District

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