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Recycling and composting are important in Washington. Let's get it right. Please prioritize source separation instead of depackaging.

Depackaging overcomplicates a fairly simple waste-separation process that already works. Organic waste separated at the source remains the best way to ensure clean, compost feedstocks and to prevent cross-contamination.

Washington must build on our progress. Keep food waste clean and on a path to compost or biogas. Keep packaging on a path to recycling, not shredded into a contaminated slurry that is a result of the depackaging process.

Vermont's Department of Environmental Conservation is adopting final regulations with guardrails that prioritize source separation, keeping food and packaging apart wherever it's practical. Under this approach, stale cereal is dumped from its box, and moldy oranges are removed from their plastic clamshell at the store. The food then goes to composting or biogas, and the packaging goes to recycling.

This is already standard practice at many grocery stores and restaurants. Source separation is quick and easy for the staff, helps reduce contamination, and diverts organic waste and recyclable materials from landfills.