



March 12, 2025

The Honorable Catherine Blakespear, Chair
Senate Environmental Quality Committee
1021 O Street, Room 3230
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: SB 279 (McNerney) Scaling up California Composting – SUPPORT

Dear Chair Blakespear,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we write in strong support of SB 279 (McNerney), which will expand composting capacity, divert more food scraps from landfills, and provide California growers with a climate-friendly alternative to open burning. California stands at a crossroads where the need for bold climate action has never been more urgent, and this bill is essential to achieving California's climate and waste reduction goals.

With the 2025 prohibition on open agricultural burning, growers urgently need sustainable alternatives for managing agricultural byproducts. Expanding on-farm composting options and allowing the use of off-site agricultural inputs, like manure, will enable growers to build healthy soils and transition away from burning practices that contribute to greenhouse gas emissions

and poor air quality. The use of compost not only reduces greenhouse gas emissions from landfills and agriculture, it also enhances the soil's ability to serve as a carbon sink and retain water. Studies have found that increasing soil organic matter by just 1% on California's 20.4 million acres of arable land would represent 340 million metric tons CO₂ equivalent transferred from the atmosphere to working lands, proving to be an essential strategy to achieve the state's net zero target.

Additionally, California must scale up its organic waste processing infrastructure to meet the state's short-lived climate pollutants targets. Organic materials like food scraps and yard trimmings make up half of what Californians send to landfills and emit 20% of the state's methane as they decompose. In a critical effort to reduce methane and other short-lived climate pollutant emissions, California set organic waste diversion targets of 50% by 2020 and 75% by 2025 (SB 1383, Lara, 2016).

Despite billions of dollars in private investment, CalRecycle estimates that 50 to 100 new or expanded organic waste facilities are still needed to meet SB 1383's goals. However, large-scale facility permitting is a slow and resource intensive process, and immediate action is needed to maximize the capacity of existing operations. By allowing Notification Tier facilities to process up to 10 percent food waste, SB 279 will increase food scrap diversion and accelerate progress towards the state's climate goals.

Community composting plays a particularly vital role in this effort. Community composters are on the frontlines of redefining food scraps as a resource rather than a waste. These local programs not only divert organic waste from landfills but also reduce emissions, build healthy local soils, and engage communities in local food systems sustainability and climate solutions.

However, despite their immense environmental and social benefits, current regulations cap community composting capacity at just 100 cubic yards— a limit that stifles their ability to scale up and meet growing demands. By raising this limit to 500 cubic yards, SB 279 will empower grassroots efforts to process organics locally, thereby strengthening local food systems and ensuring that the benefits of composting are shared within the communities where waste is generated.

This bill also builds on recent legislative progress to support local composting efforts. Last year, California took a major step forward with the passage of AB 2346 (Lee), which allows local jurisdictions to count compost produced and procured from community composters toward their organic waste procurement targets under SB 1383. By expanding the capacity of community composting operations, SB 279 will ensure that more locally produced compost is available for cities and counties striving to meet these goals. Together, these policies create a stronger, more resilient compost market—one that not only diverts waste from landfills but also keeps the environmental and economic benefits of composting close to home.

Without increased composting capacity at all levels—on-farm, mid-sized, and community-based—California risks falling short of its climate and waste diversion goals. SB 279

provides practical and necessary changes that promote the development and expansion of composting facilities and create long-term environmental benefits.

For these reasons, we urge your support for SB 279.

Sincerely,



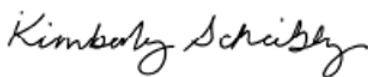
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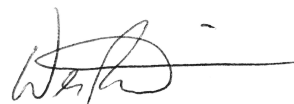
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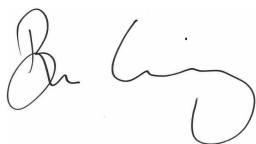
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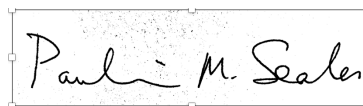
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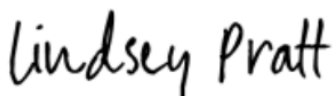
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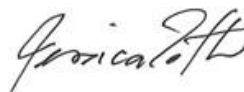
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