

SB 1255 (Portantino)

Single-use products waste reduction: Dishwasher Grant Program for Waste Reduction in K-12 Schools

PROBLEM

California has a single-use waste crisis and is looking for waste reduction solutions. Few schools have dishwashers, and thus school districts generate a tremendous amount of waste from single-use foodware such as trays, plates, and utensils. This waste must be managed, but plastic recycling is inadequate and ineffective, and compostable items are not recycled at local facilities. The cost of managing waste is rising, as the costs of waste hauling, disposables, and contamination penalties increase.

The low-quality plastic and harmful chemicals used in single-use items pose health risks by releasing contaminants in composting facilities and leaching into our water supply and soil. Students also learn the wrong values from the daily practice of using and tossing single-use serveware.

However, the upfront cost of industrial dish machine equipment and the related upgrades, installation, and reconfiguration costs create a barrier to implementation. Schools operating on very limited budgets and with competing needs may stick with single-use serveware simply due to the cost of upfront investment.

BACKGROUND

Currently, there is no program in California dedicated to stemming the single-use waste stream coming from K–12 school cafeterias. Industrial dish machines present an upstream waste prevention measure by avoiding single-use items. They also normalize the re-use of daily items, teaching students the value of environmental stewardship.

Current commercial dish machines use very little water, dry quickly, and are fast and energy efficient. They can complete a cycle in only a few minutes, lowering the amount of dishes needed. Certain models can be installed without venting, significantly decreasing installation and utility costs. A well-cared for machine can last around 15 years, providing significant savings over time and offsetting waste management costs that are expected to rise in the near future. Nonetheless, industrial dish machines have high upfront costs that are cost-prohibitive for most schools.

Installing commercial dishwashers at K–12 schools will allow the transition to safe, reusable foodware designed for repeated use and sanitizing. Such a change will result in less waste and reduced hauling and litter cleanup costs, alleviating these burdens on schools and colleges. Instead of contributing to the waste crisis facing California, schools can eliminate the use of single-use foodware to help reduce waste while instilling these values in students.

SUMMARY

SB 1255 would establish the Dishwasher Grant Program for Waste Reduction in K–12 Schools, to be administered by the State Department of Education, to provide grants to school districts and charter schools for the purchase and installation of commercial dishwashers at the schoolsites. The bill would require the department to award grants of up to \$40,000 per kitchen of a school of an applicant school district or charter school.

SB 1255 would require the department to develop administrative guidelines for implementation of the program, as specified. The bill would require the department to develop mate-

rials and conduct outreach to those local educational agencies about the program, as provided. The bill would authorize, for purposes of the program, the department to enter into interagency agreements with other state agencies. The bill would make the implementation of these provisions contingent on an appropriation being made for its purposes by the Legislature in the annual Budget Act or another statute.

EXISTING LAW

Existing law requires the State Department of Education to take specified actions relating to the construction of school facilities, including to establish standards for use by school districts to ensure that the design and construction of school facilities are educationally appropriate and promote school safety and provide school districts with flexibility in designing instructional facilities. Existing law requires the department to provide information relating to the impact or potential impact upon a schoolsite of, among other things, hazardous substances and solid waste.

SUPPORT

Glendale Environmental Coalition (Sponsor)
Green Lunchroom (Sponsor)
301 Organics
350 Humboldt: Grass Roots Climate Action
350 Silicon Valley
350 Ventura County Climate Hub
5 Gyres Institute
Burbank Eco Council
California Product Stewardship Council
California School Employees Association
(CSEA)
Californians Against Waste
Center for Environmental Health
Center for Oceanic Awareness, Research, and
Education
City and County of San Francisco

City of Alameda
City of Glendale
City of Los Angeles
Climate Reality Project, Los Angeles Chapter
Climate Reality Project, San Fernando Valley
Habits of Waste
Heal the Bay
North County Climate Change Alliance
Northern California Recycling Association
Plastic Free Restaurants
Plastic Oceans International
Plastic Pollution Coalition
RecycleSmart
Save our Shores
Sea Hugger
Seventh Generation Advisors
Sierra Club
StopWaste
Upstream
WishToYou Chumash Foundation
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