

SB 1255 (Portantino)

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

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 serviceware.

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 serviceware 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 and community college campuses. 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 and community colleges 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 and community colleges 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 and Community Colleges to be administered by the Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery to provide grants to school districts, charter schools, and community college districts for the purchase and installation of commercial dishwashers at the school sites and campuses, as specified. The bill would require the department to award grants of up to \$40,000 per kitchen of a school or campus of an applicant district, as specified. The bill would require the department to develop administrative guidelines for implemen-

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tation of the program, as specified. The bill would require the department to develop materials and conduct outreach to those local educational agencies about the program, as provided. The bill would authorize the department to work with the State Department of Education, the Office of the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges, or other relevant state agencies for purposes of the program. 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

The California Integrated Waste Management Act of 1989, which is administered by the Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery, generally regulates the management and recycling of solid waste. Existing law requires the department to develop and implement a source reduction and recycling program for school districts that includes, among other things, the development of a model waste reduction and recycling program for school districts and schools.

SUPPORT

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350 Silicon Valley
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Californians Against Waste
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Center for Oceanic Awareness, Research, and Education
Climate Reality Project, Los Angeles Chapter
Climate Reality Project, San Fernando Valley
Climate Reality Project, San Francisco Chapter
Habits of Waste
Heal the Bay
Northern California Recycling Association
Plastic Free Restaurants
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