

February 18, 2025

Oregon State Legislature
House Committee on Climate, Energy, and Environment
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: House Bill 3018, relating to food waste

Chair Lively, Vice-Chairs Gamba and Levy, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Oregon's 61 community hospitals, the Hospital Association of Oregon opposes House Bill 3018, which would require entities that cook, assemble, process, serve, and sell food to recover, source, label, and arrange for collection and transport of food waste for composting.

Oregon hospitals are struggling, with approximately half losing money because Medicare, Medicaid, and other health insurers do not cover the cost of providing care. To implement this bill, hospitals and other entities would need to make significant investments in outfitting kitchens, waste collection systems, and staff training, thus placing an additional burden on Oregon's community hospitals. No new funding accompanies this mandate, meaning health dollars that could go to health care services and health care workers will need to go to this food waste program.

Hospitals are places of healing where food is available. Hospitals comply with extensive food and dietary regulations under the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, as well as accreditation entities such as the Joint Commission. Hospitals are required to have qualified dietitians, who are trained in the science of nutrition, to supervise the nutritional aspects of patient care. These professionals monitor and assign diets for patient needs. Additionally, hospital dietitians are required to develop menu options that meet the nutritional needs of patients in accordance with recognized dietary practices, such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Center or the Institute of Medicine Food and Nutrition Board's Dietary Reference Intakes. The Joint Commission requires hospitals to accommodate a patient's special diet or cultural, religious, or ethnic food preferences, unless contraindicated by a medical provider. Patient care is where hospitals' food-related focus must be, not with food waste sorting and storing. If food waste and storing is a priority for the state, the mandates should be paired with adequate funding so that patients and health care workers are not impacted.

Additionally, we have concerns and need more clarity about the ability of the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to implement this program for hospitals given that most hospitals are not



located within 100 miles of a composting facility.¹ DEQ does have an active program for regulating composting facilities.² However, according to a 2021 DEQ report, most composting in the state is recovered yard debris and only a small percentage is food waste; several rural counties were reported as not collecting any compost.³ It is unclear how, when, or where hospitals would be able to arrange for food waste to be collected and transported to a facility authorized to accept food waste for composting.

We are also concerned about the implementation timelines in the legislation, especially given that the DEQ is still only beginning to implement the Recycling Modernization Act created by Senate Bill 582 (2021); while the law became effective January 1, 2022, the recycling program changes will start in July 2025.⁴ Combined with the lack of food composting facilities in the state, especially facilities that would be able to handle the amount of industrial food waste collected under House Bill 3018, we do not believe it will be feasible to meet the January 1, 2027, operative date.

If House Bill 3018 moves forward, we ask that hospitals be exempted, allowing hospital staff to focus on providing high-quality patient care.

Sincerely,



Travis Meuwissen
Director of Government Affairs
Hospital Association of Oregon

About the Hospital Association of Oregon

Founded in 1934, the Hospital Association of Oregon (HAO) is a mission-driven, nonprofit trade association representing Oregon's 61 hospitals. Together, hospitals are the sixth largest private employer statewide, employing more than 70,000 employees. Committed to fostering a stronger, safer, more equitable Oregon where all people have access to the high-quality care they need, the hospital association supports Oregon's hospitals so they can support their communities; educates government officials and the public on the state's health landscape and works collaboratively with policymakers, community

¹ <https://archive.greenblue.org/work/compostingmaps/>

² <https://www.oregon.gov/deq/mm/swpermits/Pages/Composting.aspx>

³ 2021 Oregon Material Recovery and Waste Generation Rates Report, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, <https://www.oregon.gov/deq/recycling/Documents/2021MRWGRatesReport.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.oregon.gov/deq/recycling/pages/modernizing-oregons-recycling-system.aspx>



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based organizations and the health care community to build consensus on and advance health care policy benefiting the state's 4 million residents.



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