



March 21, 2022

Anthony J. Portantino, State Senator
California State Senate
State Capitol, Room 5050
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 1255 (Portantino) —**SUPPORT**

Dear Senator Portantino:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we are writing to express our support for SB 1255 (Portantino): Single-use products waste reduction: Dishwasher Grant Program for Waste Reduction in K–12 Schools and Community Colleges. The bill would establish the Dishwasher Grant Program for Waste Reduction in K–12 Schools and Community Colleges to provide grants to school districts, charter schools, and community college districts for the purchase and installation of commercial dishwashers.

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 food-contaminated plastic contaminates recycling, plastic recycling is inadequate and ineffective, and food-contaminated paper-based products are not commonly accepted at composting 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. Scientists have found that many single-use foodware products contain hazardous chemicals¹ that have been linked to a variety of health complications, including hormone disruption, cancer, behavioral and learning disorders, and much more². Students also learn the wrong values from the daily practice of using and tossing single-use serviceware.

Industrial dish machines present an upstream waste prevention measure, avoiding single-use items and teaching students the values of environmental stewardship by normalizing the re-use of daily items. Current commercial dish machines use very little water and are both fast and energy efficient, lowering the amount of dishes needed on-site. With 15-year lifespans, dish machines provide significant savings and offset waste management costs expected to rise in the near future.

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 because of the upfront investment costs.

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. SB 1255 would require the Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery to award grants of up to \$40,000 per kitchen at each school or campus in an applicant district.

Installing commercial dishwashers at K–12 schools and community colleges will allow the transition to safe, reusable foodware designed for repeated use and sanitizing. This change will result in reductions of waste as well as hauling and litter clean-up costs, alleviating these burdens on schools and colleges. Instead of contributing to the waste crisis facing California, eliminating the use of single-use foodware in schools and community colleges will help reduce waste while instilling environmental stewardship values in students.

Thank you for your continued leadership on this issue. We respectfully request your “AYE” vote for SB 1255: Single-use products waste reduction: Dishwasher Grant Program for Waste Reduction in K–12 Schools and Community Colleges.

¹ “Thegreenteam.org.” The Green Team, School Nutrition Foundation, Nov. 2009, <https://thegreenteam.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Green-Team-Library-Curriculum.xlsx>.

² Groh, Ksenia J., et al. “Overview of Known Plastic Packaging-Associated Chemicals and Their Hazards.” *Science of The Total Environment*, vol. 651, Feb. 2019, pp. 3253–68. ScienceDirect, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2018.10.015>.

Sincerely,



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