

February 13, 2023

Dear Chairperson,

The City of St. Louis Park is submitting this letter in support of the expansion of Minnesota Law 325E.046, Standards For Labeling Plastic Bags, to also cover food and beverage packaging through HF1315.

Since the early 1980's, when the city began organized recycling collection at the curb, St. Louis Park has been committed to recycling and reducing waste. In the last decade, this commitment resulted in adding residential organics collection at the curb and at multifamily drop-sites. In 2017, the City implemented a Zero Waste Packaging ordinance with the goal of decreasing single-use food packaging in the trash by requiring compostable or recyclable packaging. The city feels the expansion of this bill is an essential component in ensuring the long-term success of these programs for two key reasons:

First, it will reduce resident confusion by preventing companies from putting misleading products on store shelves. Instead, products claiming to breakdown at a compost facility will be required to have independent testing to verify that this is the case. In addition, the new labeling requirements will help consumers correctly identify certified compostable products. St. Louis Park residents are increasingly searching for certified compostable packaging in stores and restaurants because they are accepted in the city's organics program as a way to divert more food from the trash. Better labeling ensures our residents can easily identify the correct items. In 2019, St. Louis Park updated our Zero Waste Packaging ordinance to require such labeling on cups due to confusion caused by unmarked items. This legislation will go even further in clearing up any confusion caused by compostable product labeling.

Second, the bill expansion will decrease the amount of non-compostable products inadvertently ending up at composting facilities from well-intentioned, but misled, consumers. This means that composters would have less contaminants to remove, resulting in high-quality compost which can be sold back to the city for use in roadway projects and to our residents for use in their gardens and lawns. Strong, stable markets for finished compost are important for the viability of the composting facilities that process the food scraps and yard waste collected in the city.

In summary, to support successful waste diversion programs, high quality compost and reduced consumer confusion, the City of St. Louis Park urges the legislature to expand the existing law to cover food and beverage packaging. Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Kala R. Fisher

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cc: Kim Keller, city manager