March 8, 2018

S.7508A/A.9508A, Part BB (Article VII, TED)

Title: Encourages the prevention of food waste generation by commercial generators and residents; directs the recovery of excess edible food from high-volume commercial food waste generators; and ensures that a significant portion of inedible food waste from large volume food waste generators is managed in a sustainable manner, and does not end up being sent to landfills or incinerators.

Statement of Support: According to the Pollution Prevention Institute of New York (P2I), close to 40 percent of the food produced in the United States is never eaten - approximately 50 million tons annually - resulting in $218 billion spent on wasted food. This wasted food not only is diverting much needed food resources from food banks, soup kitchens and shelters, but when this waste ends up in landfills, the methane pollution produced by the organic waste decomposition cycle only adds to greenhouse gas pollution.

This bill would create a framework for all locations that generate two tons per week or more of excess food and food scraps to track and reduce the amount of food waste sent directly to landfills or incinerators. The bill would encourage to the maximum extent donation for human consumption (in accordance with applicable laws, rules and regulations for food donation), followed by organics recycling. The bill outlines and highlights the proper protocol to follow for adequate reduction and storage. The bill also outlines the ability for generators to apply for a one-year waiver, if there is not a processing facility within 40 miles of the location, or if they are able to demonstrate the cost of hauling to a compost facility or an anaerobic digester is more costly than their current hauling fees.

The Department of Environmental Conservation will be charged with developing and making available educational materials to assist food generators in complying with this proposed legislation. The DEC will also develop educational materials on food waste minimization and encourage municipalities to disseminate these materials to their municipal websites and in any future mailings to residents, as source reduction is the most preferred form of food recovery.

Additional benefits of reducing food waste include: a reduction in labor demands through efficient handling and storage; increased donations of fresh and non-perishable foods, providing essential meals to less fortunate families and individuals;
reducing costs to business - waste less and spend less by finding ways to prevent waste in purchasing, as well as reducing energy and labor costs associated with handling food that is prepared and thrown away.¹

A number of states and several cities have recently adopted new laws restricting food and organic waste disposal in landfills - New York City (this legislation does exclude cities with populations of one million or more with local ordinances in place), Seattle, California, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Vermont. New York can join in this forward-thinking and cost-effective practice by passing this smart and economical legislative initiative. The Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter is proud to support S.7508-A/A.9508-A. Part BB and strongly urges your support.

Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter Strongly Urges Your Support Of S.7508-A/A.9508-A. Part BB.

¹ Pollution Prevention Institute (P2I) Sustainable Food Program; https://www.rit.edu/affiliate/nysp2i/food-program