

**REPORT OF THE  
CHIEF LEGISLATIVE ANALYST**

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DATE: May 5, 2025

TO: Honorable Members of the Rules, Elections, and Intergovernmental Relations Committee

FROM: Sharon M. Tso  
Chief Legislative Analyst



Council File No. 25-0002-S15  
Assignment No: 25-04-0278

SUBJECT: Resolution to Support SB 279 (McNerney)

CLA RECOMMENDATION: Adopt Resolution (Blumenfield – Nazarian) to include in the City’s 2025-2026 State Legislative Program, support for SB 279 (McNerney), which would allow: farmers and wine grape growers to compost onsite; community composting, urban farms, and school farms to compost up to 500 cubic yards of green waste; incentivize the blending of food scraps into medium-sized green waste processing facilities operated by the City; and, composting operations to sell or give away up to 5,000 cubic yards of compost a year.

SUMMARY

The Resolution (Blumenfield – Nazarian), introduced March 19, 2025, states that the City has positioned itself as a global leader and has prioritized actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible. The Resolution notes that in 2016, under SB 1383, the State of California adopted methane emissions targets to reduce short-lived climate pollutants, such as food and yard waste, by requiring all jurisdictions to reduce organic waste disposal by 75% by 2025. The Resolution further notes that under SB 1383, all jurisdictions need to provide organic waste collection services and utilize recycling facilities, procure products made from recycled organic material, as well as redirect 20 percent of edible food currently thrown away to those going hungry by the year 2025.

The Resolution states that several methods of implementing SB 1383 require the creation of compost which, when applied to working lands and managed public lands such as medians, parks, and parkways, can sequester and thereby effectively drawdown greenhouse gas emissions. This is the only currently-existing, and inexpensive, method by which to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, remediate soil contamination, reduce erosion and increase water retention.

The Resolution notes that the City has adopted aggressive Zero Waste goals and has been at the forefront of implementing waste collection programs and recycling to address operational efficiencies and climate change. This includes RecycLA contracts for solid waste collection, recycling, and organics; expanding the residential food collection and composting program; and the creation of Regenerate LA.

Senate Bill (SB) 279 (McNerney) would benefit community composting programs, urban farms, and school farms by allowing them to compost larger amounts of green waste onsite. The bill would provide California farms and vineyards with an eco-friendly alternative – the ability to compost large amounts of green waste onsite rather than having to ship it to another composting facility hundreds of miles away.

Therefore, the Resolution requests that the City support SB 279 (McNerney), which would allow: farmers and wine grape growers to compost onsite; community composting, urban farms, and school farms to compost up to 500 cubic yards of green waste; incentivize the blending of food scraps into medium-sized green waste processing facilities operated by the City; and, composting operations to sell or give away up to 5,000 cubic yards of compost a year.

## **BACKGROUND**

SB 279 (McNerney) was created to address several interrelated challenges facing California. Organic waste constitutes 48% of the material added to California landfills annually. When this waste decomposes in landfills, it produces methane, a potent greenhouse gas. According to CalRecycle, landfills are the third largest source of methane in California, accounting for 20% of the state's methane emissions.

In 2016, California passed SB 1383 to address this issue, setting targets to reduce methane emissions by 40% by 2030 relative to 2014 levels and to reduce organic waste disposal in landfills by 75% by 2025. However, meeting these targets requires sufficient infrastructure to process diverted organic waste.

SB 279 was proposed after the recent ban on agricultural burning that went into effect on January 1, 2025. This ban eliminated a common method for farmers to dispose of agricultural waste, particularly from activities like orchard and vineyard removals.

California currently has a shortage of composting facilities, forcing farms and vineyards to transport green waste long distances. By allowing agricultural operations to compost more material onsite, SB 279 provides farmers with a climate-friendly alternative to burning while keeping valuable nutrients on their land.

Composting offers multiple environmental benefits aligned with California's climate objectives. It creates healthy soils that sequester carbon, retain water, and increase food security. By expanding composting capacity throughout the state, SB 279 aims to reduce methane emissions from landfills while supporting sustainable agricultural practices.

## ***Bill Provisions***

SB 279 aims to reduce regulatory burdens on composting operations while expanding California's capacity to process organic waste. Under current regulations, operations composting green material, agricultural material, food material, and vegetative food material are excluded from extensive solid waste facility permit requirements if they maintain less than 100 cubic yards of material onsite. The bill raises this limit to 500 cubic yards, a five-fold increase.

Additionally, the bill creates a new exclusion specifically for composting agricultural materials from "large-scale biomass management events" such as crop rotations or the removal of orchards and vineyards. This allows farms to process substantial amounts of agricultural waste onsite without triggering full regulatory requirements.

The legislation creates a five-year "onramp" for medium-sized composting operations (those between 500 and 12,500 cubic yards of material) to accept food waste while operating under the simpler "enforcement agency notification" tier rather than needing a full solid waste facility permit immediately. These operations can accept up to 10% food material by volume during this transition period, as long as they comply with existing regulations and notify the appropriate enforcement agency.

SB 279 also increases the amount of compost that agricultural operations can give away or sell annually while remaining in the excluded regulatory tier. The current limit of 1,000 cubic yards would increase to 5,000 cubic yards, allowing farms to distribute more of their compost without facing additional regulatory requirements.

#### DEPARTMENTS NOTIFIED

Department of Public Works, Bureau of Sanitation

#### BILL STATUS

02/05/25	Introduced and referred to the Senate Committee on Rules
02/14/25	Referred to the Senate Committee on Environmental Quality
03/19/25	Referred to the Senate Committee on Appropriations
04/07/25	Placed on Appropriations Committee's Suspense File

*CD Fields*

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Christopher Fields  
Analyst

Attachment: 1. Resolution (Blumenfield - Nazarian)  
2. SB 279 (McNerney)

## RESOLUTIONS, ELECTIONS, INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

**WHEREAS**, any official position of the City of Los Angeles with respect to legislation, rules, regulations or policies proposed to or pending before a local, state or federal governmental body or agency must first have been adopted in the form of a Resolution by the City Council with the concurrence of the Mayor; and

**WHEREAS**, global leadership continues to falter in meeting emissions reductions goals necessary to keep the climate system stable, and therefore actions by Cities and States remain vital to reducing GHG emissions; and

**WHEREAS**, through bold climate efforts over the past decade, the City of Los Angeles positioned itself as a global leader and has prioritized actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible; and

**WHEREAS**, as a necessary response to scientific studies that greenhouse gasses released by landfilling food and yard waste is a major contributor to pollutants and climate change, in 2016, under SB 1383, the State of California adopted methane emissions targets to reduce such short-lived climate pollutants by requiring all jurisdictions to reduce organic waste disposal by 75% by 2025; and

**WHEREAS**, under SB 1383, all jurisdictions need to provide organic waste collection services and utilize recycling facilities, procure products made from recycled organic material, as well as redirect 20 percent of edible food currently thrown away to those going hungry by the year 2025; and

**WHEREAS**, under SB 1383, each jurisdiction is accountable for compliance by its source-generators, and CalRecycle, the State's recycling and waste regulatory agency, is authorized to issue escalating penalties for non-compliance; and

**WHEREAS**, Cities and Counties throughout the State have developed robust climate action plans including requirements for the implementation of SB 1383; and

**WHEREAS**, several methods of implementing SB 1383 require the creation of compost which, when applied to working lands and managed public lands such as medians, parks, and parkways, can sequester and thereby effectively drawdown greenhouse gas emissions, the only currently-existing – and inexpensive – method by which to do so, remediate soil contamination, reduce erosion and increase water retention; and

**WHEREAS**, Zero Waste is the conservation of all resources by means of responsible production, consumption, reuse, and recovery of products, packaging, and materials without burning and with no discharges to land, water, or air that threaten the environment or human health; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Los Angeles adopted aggressive Zero Waste goals and has been at the forefront of implementing waste collection programs and recycling to address operational efficiencies and climate change. In January 2017, the City approved seven RecycLA contracts for the collection of solid waste, recycling and organics from large multifamily properties and businesses. These contracts contained specific landfill reduction targets that must be contractually met or exceeded. The City has since also expanded its residential food collection and composting program; and

**WHEREAS**, the City Council approved the creation of Regenerate LA, an innovative effort aiming to turn food and green waste into compost, create community compost sites, spread compost on City-managed lands, and thereby create career pathways; and

**WHEREAS**, community compost sites can help keep soil local, reduce vehicle miles traveled, and provide compost for local uses, including brownfield remediation; and

**WHEREAS**, the climate change-exacerbated Palisades and Eaton Fires left behind massive amounts of biomass that could be useful in rebuilding healthy, carbon-sequestering soils, if composted and spread correctly; and

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**WHEREAS**, Senator McNerney has introduced State Bill 279, which will benefit community composting programs, urban farms, and school farms by allowing them to compost larger amounts of green waste onsite; and

**WHEREAS**, SB 279 will provide California farms and vineyards with an eco-friendly alternative — the ability to compost large amounts of green waste onsite rather than having to ship it to another composting facility hundreds of miles away; and

**WHEREAS**, given the dangers of climate breakdown and the increasing and unsustainable cost of addressing climate disasters, it is in the fiduciary best long-term interest of the City of Los Angeles to support the ongoing robust and rapid implementation of SB 1383, including ways to improve composting efforts in agricultural areas throughout the State;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, with the concurrence of the Mayor, that by the adoption of this Resolution, the City of Los Angeles hereby includes in its 2025-2026 State Legislative Program SUPPORT for SB 279 (McNerney), which will allow:

- Farmers and winegrape growers to compost onsite when they have large amounts of agricultural waste, such as when they remove an old orchard or vineyard, and combine their compost with agriculture waste from offsite;
- Community composting, urban farms, and school farms to compost up to 500 cubic yards of green waste (currently capped at 100 cubic yards.);
- Incentivize the blending of food scraps into medium-sized green waste processing facilities operated by the City of Los Angeles, and other entities;
- Composting operations to sell or give away up to 5,000 cubic yards of compost a year (farms and vineyards are currently capped at 1,000 cubic yards).

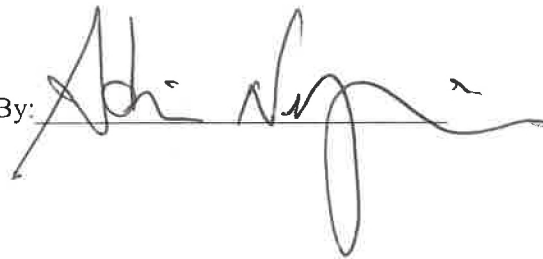
Presented By:



BOB BLUMENFIELD

Councilmember, Third District

Seconded By:



ORIGINAL

AMENDED IN SENATE MARCH 20, 2025

**SENATE BILL**

**No. 279**

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**Introduced by Senator McNerney**

February 5, 2025

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An act to add Section 44019 to the Public Resources Code, relating to solid waste.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 279, as amended, McNerney. Solid waste: compostable materials.

Existing law requires the Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery to adopt and revise regulations setting forth minimum standards for composting, in accordance with law. Existing regulations require all compostable materials handling activities to obtain a permit prior to commencing operations and to comply with specified requirements. Existing regulations specify 4 regulatory tiers for composting operations, with different requirements for each tier. The 4 tiers are excluded, enforcement agency notification, registration permit, and full solid waste facility permit.

In the excluded tier, existing regulations specify the “excluded activities” that do not constitute compostable material handling operations or facilities and, therefore, are not subject to permit requirements or other regulatory requirements. One of the excluded activities is the composting of green material, agricultural material, food material, and vegetative food material, alone or in combination, if the total amount of feedstock and compost onsite at any one time does not exceed 100 cubic yards and 750 square feet.

This bill would require that the total amount of feedstock and compost onsite at any one time not exceed 500 cubic yards instead of the 100 cubic yards and 750 square feet in the regulations. The bill would also

require the composting of agricultural materials and residues that are from a large-scale biomass management event at an agricultural facility that does not otherwise operate as a solid waste facility to be an excluded activity, as specified.

Existing regulations require composting operations in the enforcement agency notification tier to comply with certain solid waste requirements, including, but not limited to, providing written notice to an enforcement agency before commencing operations, as provided. Under existing regulations, the enforcement agency notification tier includes, but is not limited to, certain agricultural, green material, and biosolids composting operations.

This bill would require a composting operation to be included in the enforcement agency notification tier and authorize the operation to accept up to 10% food material by volume for a period not to exceed 5 years before applying for a full solid waste facility permit, if specified conditions are met, including, but not limited to, the operation having between 500 and 12,500 cubic yards of material onsite.

Existing regulations prohibit a composting operation from giving away or selling more than 1,000 cubic yards of compost product annually if it is in the excluded tier or if it is an agricultural material composting operation in the enforcement agency notification tier, its feedstock is both green material and agricultural material, and the operation is located on land zoned for agricultural uses.

This bill would authorize those composting operations to give away or sell up to 5,000 cubic yards of compost product annually.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes.  
State-mandated local program: no.

*The people of the State of California do enact as follows:*

- 1 SECTION 1. Section 44019 is added to the Public Resources
- 2 Code, immediately following Section 44018, to read:
- 3 44019. (a) Composting green material, agricultural material,
- 4 food material, and vegetative food material activities, alone or in
- 5 combination, is an excluded activity for purposes of Section 17855
- 6 of Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations if it meets either
- 7 of the following:
- 8 (1) The total amount of feedstock and compost onsite at any
- 9 one time does not exceed 500 cubic yards.

1 (2) (A) The composting is of agricultural materials and residues  
2 that are from a large-scale biomass management event at an  
3 agricultural facility that does not otherwise operate as a solid waste  
4 facility, including, but not limited to, a crop rotation or the removal  
5 of a whole orchard or vineyard. *Material or residues from a large*  
6 *scale biomass management event do not include animal carcasses.*

7 (B) (i) The excluded activity described in subparagraph (A)  
8 may include acquiring and using agricultural materials, agricultural  
9 byproduct materials, and agricultural manure *from an agricultural*  
10 *site* to blend with the onsite agricultural materials and residues  
11 resulting from the removal of the whole orchard or vineyard.

12 (ii) *An entity that acquires and uses agricultural materials,*  
13 *agricultural byproduct materials, or agricultural manure pursuant*  
14 *to clause (i) shall maintain records identifying the origin of the*  
15 *material or manure and present those records to enforcement*  
16 *agencies upon request.*

17 (b) (1) A composting operation is included in the enforcement  
18 agency notification tier, as prescribed by Section 17854.1 of Title  
19 14 of the California Code of Regulations, and may accept up to  
20 10 percent food material by volume for a period not to exceed five  
21 years before applying for a full solid waste facility permit, if all  
22 of the following are met:

23 (A) The operation has between 500 and 12,500 cubic yards of  
24 material onsite.

25 (B) The operation is in compliance with Title 14 of the  
26 California Code of Regulations.

27 (C) The operation notifies the applicable enforcement agency  
28 in writing before accepting food material.

29 (2) The department may adopt best management practices and  
30 training requirements for activities described in paragraph (1).

31 (c) A composting operation may give away or sell up to 5,000  
32 cubic yards of compost product annually for purposes of both of  
33 the following:

34 (1) Paragraph (1) of subdivision (a) of Section 17855 of Title  
35 14 of the California Code of Regulations.

36 (2) Subparagraph (A) of paragraph (1) of subdivision (d) of  
37 Section 17856 of Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations.