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July 12, 2011

Chairwoman Anne M. Gobi
Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture
State House, Room 473F
Boston, MA 02133

Chairman Marc R. Pacheco
Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture
State House, Room 312-B
Boston, MA 02133

Re: Testimony in Support of S379, Recycling in State Buildings

Dear Chairwoman Gobi, Chairman Pacheco, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for providing this opportunity to offer our comments on S379, legislation which would require recycling in public buildings. We wish to express our strong support in favor of this bill.

The Sierra Club is the oldest and largest non-profit, non-partisan organization environmental organization in the country. With over a forty year history in this chapter, the Massachusetts Sierra Club represents about 22,000 members and supporters throughout the state and 1.4 million nationwide. We fight for clean air, clean water, the preservation of the Commonwealth's most precious natural spaces, and healthy, vibrant communities.

This proposed legislation would require all state offices and facilities to require that specified materials in state facilities be recycled. While providing appropriate recycling facilities would not have a significant effect on the overall recycling rate in the Commonwealth, it would serve as a role model to businesses and landlords. While the State House has some recycling bins, it lacks adequate facilities for paper, plastics, and other goods.

A recent study concluded that increased access, e.g. ubiquitous and widespread placement of recycling receptacles, is effective in increasing office generated paper and other recyclables.¹ While public resistance to recycling is the greatest hurdle, making access is the greatest opportunity we have to break this cycle.

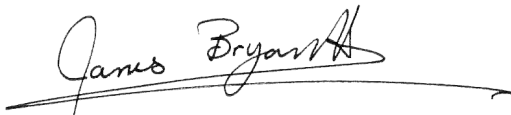
When we throw garbage out we assume it is going "away". But where is away? Truthfully, there is no "away". We have diminishing landfill capacity and incineration releases toxins into the environment. We are a net exporter of our waste, and need to move towards our goal of becoming waste self-sufficient.

- As much as 93% of all office waste is paper, most of it recyclable. A typical office generates about 1.5 pounds of waste paper per employee each day.²
- Recycling one ton of paper typically saves about 6.7 cubic yards of landfill space. A cubic yard of stacked office paper weighs about 380 pounds. Cost savings may be estimated by multiplying the tons recycled by 6.7 times the cost per cubic yard for waste disposal (if by volume) or by cost per ton (if by weight).³
- The Commonwealth needs to work towards a 70% waste reduction goal as part of DEP's Solid Waste Master Plan⁴. The plan places an increased emphasis on expanding and targeting waste ban compliance and enforcement, leveraging resources, building cost-effective programs, and prioritizing materials and sectors where the greatest amount of waste reduction can be achieved.
- Commercial Municipal Solid Waste (MSW): organics (especially food waste) and paper and cardboard – These materials have a combined additional annual waste reduction potential of more than 1.6 million tons, representing more than 75% of the total additional commercial waste reduction potential of 2.2 million tons per year. Both of these streams have the potential to be recycled or composted cost-effectively well beyond existing levels.

It is essential that government facilities abide by the standards they have set for recycling and provide the leadership that's needed to decrease our dependency on landfilling and incineration.

Because this proposed legislation would have a positive impact on recycling rates and set appropriate standards for increasing those rates, the Sierra Club fully endorses S379 and hopes this is reported favorably by the committee and is supported by all members of the Senate and House of Representatives.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James McCaffrey". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line that extends to the right.

James McCaffrey
Director
Massachusetts Sierra Club

¹ Plastic Recycling Collection: National Reach Study, American Chemistry Council, May 2011

² Study, Pennsylvania Dept of Environmental Protection

³ Study, Pennsylvania Dept of Environmental Protection

⁴ Solid Waste Master Plan: 2006 Revision, Massachusetts Dept of Environmental Protection.