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To: CSAC Agriculture, Environment & Natural Resources Policy Committee  
From: Cara Martinson, CSAC Legislative Representative

**RE: Climate Change and Waste Management: Super Pollutants, Waste & Recycling**

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**Background.** The Legislature and regulatory agencies are currently contemplating a new requirement that would increase the amount of organic material we divert from our landfills in order to reduce the amount of methane emissions from the waste sector in California. Methane gas is considered a Short Lived Climate Pollutant (SLCP) – which includes black carbon, methane and hydrofluorocarbon gases – and is one of the most significant gases that contribute to the human enhancement of the global greenhouse effect after CO<sub>2</sub>.

There are two similar proposals moving through both the Legislature and the regulatory process at the California Air Resources Board that would seek to limit the amount of SLCPs we omit in California, including methane emissions. These proposals will significantly impact local governments, as cities and counties manage the flow of waste in California and are required to recycle and divert materials out of our landfills

**Existing Law.** California currently has a 75% statewide goal to reduce waste through recycling, and composting by 2020. That is, of the material that is intended for disposal, we will reduce, reuse or recycle 75% and the remaining 25% will be put in a landfill. In addition, there are existing laws – AB 341 (Chesbro) Chapter 476, Statutes of 2011 & AB 1826 (Chesbro) Chapter 727, Statutes of 2014 – that require commercial businesses to recycle both bottles and cans and organic waste. The state has mandated commercial organics recycling to achieve a 50% reduction in disposal of organics by 2020. Local governments are required to develop organic waste recycling programs on and after January 1, 2016, to divert organic waste generated by businesses. In addition, cities and counties are working with the waste hauling and management community to ensure that there is adequate capacity at recycling facilities to handle this portion of the waste stream.

**Policy Proposals.** The California Air Resources Board (CARB) has proposed a strategy to further reduce methane emissions from the waste sector, through a Short-Lived Climate Pollutant strategy. This strategy, relative to the waste sector, adds upon existing mandates to develop a regulation by 2018 to effectively eliminate the disposal of organic material in landfills by 2025. Similarly, Senator Ricardo Lara has proposed a bill this year, SB 1383, which would require, among other things, a 40% reduction in methane emissions in California by 2030. These proposed mandates are in addition to existing diversion targets for organic materials. Organic waste such as green materials and food materials are recyclable through composting and mulching, and through a process called anaerobic digestion, a method that breaks down organic waste to generate electricity and heat, or into renewable natural gas and transportation fuels. These new requirements would add additional pressure on local governments to develop the necessary infrastructure to process this waste.

**Building a New Organics Infrastructure.** To place these new requirements in perspective, in the last 20 years, California has about 13 active anaerobic digestion (AD) facilities and 169 active composting facilities. CSAC and our coalition of local government and industry partners have calculated that at least 135-150 new facilities must be financed, sited, permitted, and built in the next four years to achieve the CARB Draft Strategy's target of 75 percent organics diversion by 2020. Additional 100-150 facilities must be added in the following five years to achieve the 90 percent target by 2025.

On average, it takes a minimum of five years to finance, site, and permit and build an AD facility. In addition, it is extremely difficult to permit a new composting facility within urbanized areas. Thus, we have strong concerns that we will not be about to build enough organics recycling capacity in this truncated timeframe without historic and monumental changes to local siting processes, permitting, and CEQA.

We estimate the total cost to develop the infrastructure necessary to handle additional organics recycling to be around \$1.35 billion in the next four years. This does not include the substantial additional costs to collect, process, and deliver the organics to the facilities. We are concerned that the CARB's draft strategy and any similar legislative proposals do not identify the source(s) of this funding or how the money will be raised in such a short time.

**Recommendation.** CSAC will continue to work as part of a coalition of local governments and industry partners to express our concerns with the proposed legislative and regulatory measures. We will also support funding to assist with the development of organics management infrastructure.