



## Legislation Text

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### Resolution to Oppose Lifting the Ban on Landfilling Yard Waste for Landfills

The Michigan House of Representatives passed bills (HB 4265 and HB 4266 ) on March 15, 2012 to lift the ban on landfilling yard waste for landfills in response to the landfill industry's pressure.

According to testimony provided to the State House of Representatives on March 6 by Ann Arbor's environmental coordinator Matt Naud, "Ann Arbor has created a composting program that is 27 percent less expensive per ton of material than landfilling." Naud adds, "The sale of the compost end-product also benefits the city. This use of the compost creates jobs and generates new funds to help support recycling and composting programs in the local community."

The cost to collect and dispose of Ann Arbor's garbage in landfills currently costs \$24.83/ton, with anticipated increases each year. In comparison, composting costs are \$19.00/ton and are expected to decrease during the next five years. Ann Arbor collects an average of 10,000 tons of yard waste per year from city properties. Landfilling these tons would cost the city an additional \$58,000.00 per year. Ann Arbor's compost site also receives yard waste from other communities and helps lower the solid waste costs for other municipalities.

The suggestion by landfill operators that yard waste buried in landfills contributes a significant source of "green energy" from captured methane gas is not supportable. There is ample research demonstrating that perishable organics (including grass clippings, leaves, and food waste) will decompose and release methane into the atmosphere during the initial three months of landfill burial-long before the gas collection systems are installed and operational. Even under optimum circumstances, less than half of the remaining landfill gasses are captured for energy production. The escaping methane gas from landfills contributes a potent greenhouse gas into the atmosphere, with 23 times the heat-trapping properties of carbon dioxide.

Methane gas-fueled generation is a less effective way to manage wastes according to the most recent U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's municipal solid waste assessment. "Combustion or gasification with energy recovery, or waste-to-energy (WTE), is the environmentally preferable route for mixed solid wastes **that are neither recyclable nor compostable.**"

<http://www.epa.gov/osw/nonhaz/municipal/wte/nonhaz.htm>

In addition to raising costs for the public in managing their yard wastes, lifting the yard waste landfill ban could encourage more states and Canada to send trash to Michigan. The existing yard waste landfill ban had some impact on reducing the amount of unseparated trash coming into the state.

Composting offers an environmentally sound, cost-effective, and decentralized method for managing yard clippings and other organic wastes, without the long-term impacts of landfill disposal. Michigan's compost industry provides sustainable jobs and produces a valuable soil amending end-product used by farmers, landscapers, governments, and residents. In contrast, landfills are engineered to exacting and expensive specifications to limit pollution from the disposal of other wastes. Repealing the

existing yard waste landfill ban benefits landfill operators for short-term solutions, while raising long-term costs to the public and environment.

Sponsored by: Councilmembers Briere, Hohnke and Mayor Hieftje

Whereas, Since 1990 the State of Michigan has enforced a ban on landfilling most yard wastes in Michigan landfills;

Whereas, This policy has diverted grass clippings, leaves, brush, and wood chips from landfill burial and supported the growth of a composting industry with jobs for site operators, haulers, and end-users throughout the state;

Whereas, Compost provides nutrient-rich soil amendments for use by residents, landscapers, MDOT, and farmers as a lower-cost alternative to the mining of topsoil and peat moss;

Whereas, The City of Ann Arbor operates a compost processing center as a cost-effective, environmentally-responsible response to landfilling yard wastes;

Whereas, To dispose of Ann Arbor's garbage in landfills currently costs \$24.83/ton, with anticipated increases each year;

Whereas, In comparison, Ann Arbor's composting costs are \$19.00/ton and are expected to decrease during the next five years;

Whereas, HB 4265 and 4366 will create a unfair competitive environment for yardwaste resources, impacting current tipfees and pricepoints;

Whereas, An impact on revenues will have a significant impact on the City of Ann Arbor's public private partnership for compost services potentially resulting in increased cost to taxpayers;

Whereas, Landfilling yard wastes creates an anaerobic condition that releases methane, a powerful greenhouse gas during the initial 90 days of burial;

Whereas, Typical landfill operations do not enclose and capture methane for energy generation until after the peak gas is released; and

Whereas, Burying large quantities of yard waste in landfills as a primary means of collecting methane gas for energy is not supported by the U.S. EPA solid waste management hierarchy.

RESOLVED, Composting offers an environmentally sound, cost-effective, and decentralized method for managing yard clippings and other organic wastes, without the long-term impacts of landfill disposal;

RESOLVED, Michigan's compost industry provides sustainable jobs and produces a valuable soil amending end-product used by farmers, landscapers, governments, and residents;

RESOLVED, Diverting yard waste to landfills for gas-to-energy operations is an ineffective, more-costly direction with short-term benefits to landfill operators and long-term hazards to Michigan's natural and economic environments;

RESOLVED, The State of Michigan must retain and continue to enforce the 1990 ban on yard wastes to landfills; and

RESOLVED, That City Council authorizes the City Administrator to take necessary administrative actions to implement this resolution.

Sponsored by: Councilmembers Briere, Hohnke and Mayor Hieftje

**As amended by Ann Arbor City Council on March 19, 2012**