



MODERNIZING SCHOOL WASTE MANAGEMENT

In Kentucky K-12 Public Schools

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THE SCALE

02

Estimated annual impact in Kentucky K-12 public schools

CAFETERIA TRAYS

74 MILLION¹
estimated EPS trays used annually

\$3.7–5.5 MILLION⁴
estimated annual EPS tray cost

FOOD WASTE

17 MILLION LB²
estimated food waste annually

\$344,638³
estimated annual landfill tipping
fees for food waste

Sources: ¹Kentucky Dept. of Education; Congressional Research Service; KRS 158.070 school-calendar requirements. ²KDE; CRS; World Wildlife Fund, Food Waste Warrior. ³KDE; CRS; World Wildlife Fund, Food Waste Warrior; EREF, 2025 Analysis of MSW Landfill Tipping Fees. ⁴KDE; CRS; KRS 158.070 school-calendar requirements; Pikeville High School pricing; Fayette County Public Schools, 2025 paper-products bid. Calculations by author.

EPS tray-use estimate assumes one tray per participating school lunch. Tray-cost estimate uses approximately 5.0–7.4¢ per EPS tray.

EXISTING LEGISLATION

KRS 160.294 has not been updated since its enactment in 1998.

Current statute addresses:

- White paper
- Cardboard

Statute does not address:

- Aluminum cans
- Organic waste
- EPS foam trays
- Recycling education & proper sorting

PROPOSED LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



▶ EXPAND RECYCLING

Adds aluminum cans to district recycling plans, expanding recovery of recyclable metals.

▶ DIVERT ORGANIC WASTE

Adds cafeteria food waste and accepted compostable food-service products to district waste-diversion plans.

▶ STRENGTHEN EDUCATION

Adds student and staff waste-sorting education through existing school operations without creating a new course, graduation requirement, or academic standard.

▶ TRANSITION FROM EPS

Example: Palm Beach County, FL: 11M EPS trays eliminated annually through reusable stainless steel, with ~\$1M in reported annual savings.

SAFEGUARDS

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FACILITY AVAILABILITY

Exemption where no recycling or composting facility is available within a reasonable distance.

VENDOR AVAILABILITY

Exemption where necessary vendor service cannot be obtained without a negative fiscal impact.

REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

Exemption where organic-waste diversion cannot comply with applicable requirements without a negative fiscal impact.

EPS ALTERNATIVES

Exemption where an EPS alternative cannot be obtained without a negative fiscal impact.

EXISTING INVENTORY

Districts may continue using EPS trays purchased before July 1, 2028.

FROM LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION TO STATE POLICY

- Local implementation demonstrated both the opportunity for waste diversion and the need for realistic fiscal and operational safeguards.
- BR 79 translates those lessons into a statewide framework while preserving geographic, regulatory, and fiscal flexibility for local districts.



THANK YOU

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Questions & Discussion