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Subject: RFI submission: [Jonathan Leibovic] - Solid Waste Management
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Hello, I'm a Philadelphia resident, homeowner, and taxpayer. I'm a former School District of Philadelphia science teacher and I've also worked for non-profit organizations in our city focused on environmental justice issues, including Fairmount Water Works, Philly Thrive, and Mural Arts. My response to this RFI concerns "general information on zero waste strategies".

1. Recycling in schools: I believe that fostering a culture of recycling and sound waste management in Philadelphia begins with our youngest residents. Recycling education must be a mandatory part of schooling, and schools must recycle and separate their wastes. Currently, most Philadelphia schools do not recycle - not even paper. This creates a huge environmental impact in our city, and also a missed opportunity to help young Philadelphians practice good waste management. When school students don't recycle at schools, they grow up thinking that it's normal not to recycle. On the other hand, if recycling is encouraged in schools - not only through teaching about it, but actually enacting waste separation and separate pickup of recyclables and organic wastes - then children will grow up to be better stewards of their waste. Our school district must engage in field trips to local waste management facilities, including landfill, incineration, recycling, and composting facilities, throughout students' education between grades K-12. Schools themselves must engage in waste separation and contract with disposal companies who can maintain separate waste streams instead of simply dumping separated waste into the same trash truck for landfill.

2. Institutions vs. individuals: Households are part of the equation, but we will see bigger impacts if we enact policies that affect large institutions in our city such as hospitals, universities, convention centers, shopping districts, large office buildings, etc. When individual Philadelphians feel that they are being asked to separate waste, they feel like the city is unfairly targeting citizens and consumers when they know that large business operations generate much more waste than they do. Large institutions such as these can lead by example, can make a big environmental impact, and can also pre-empt the common argument that "individuals can only do so much" because if institutions are already on-board, then individuals will be more likely to follow suit. There must be mandatory separation of organics and recyclables for large institutions, regular audits of compliance and contamination rates, and hefty fines for noncompliance.

3. Municipal waste audit: In order to implement effective and efficient waste management solutions, we have to understand the composition of our waste stream. What are Philadelphians throwing away? How do contamination rates vary by neighborhood and by season? What are the most common waste items by weight and volume? What are the most common recyclables that are thrown in the trash? Are certain neighborhoods better at separating waste than others, and if so, what variables could explain these factors? Are disposable plastic bags still being found in the waste stream? Could a "bag-ban" style bill for styrofoam takeout containers be a logical next step towards zero waste for Philadelphia?

4. Pay DC 33 workers. Make it a clear priority that we value our sanitation workers and know what a difficult, important job they perform for our city.

Thank you for all you do to make our city cleaner and greener! I look forward to reading your responses.

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