Unit-Based Pricing and Equity

CCSMM Unit-Based Pricing Working Group Meeting
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Protecting New England’s environment for all people

THE ZERO WASTE HIERARCHY

- RETHINK/REDESIGN
- REDUCE
- REUSE
- RECYCLE/COMPOST
- MATERIAL RECOVERY
- RESIDUALS MANAGEMENT (Biological treatment and stabilized landfilling)
- UNACCEPTABLE (Waste deregulation, incineration, and “waste-to-energy”)
Unit-Based Pricing: SMART and Equitable

• Waste and Environmental Injustice
• Unit-Based Pricing Offers a Path Toward Equity
• Financial Impacts Of Unit-Based Pricing
Waste and Environmental Injustice

- Most of CT’s waste is burned in communities of color and low-income communities
- Hartford and Bridgeport incinerators combined burn about 2/3 of CT’s waste each year


590,000 tons\(^1\)

747,000 tons\(^2\)
Waste and Environmental Injustice

Hartford Incinerator:

• In 2019, fewer than 88,000 tons of the waste burned at the incinerator came from the city of Hartford
• More than 500,000 tons of waste burned in Hartford are from whiter, wealthier communities across CT

Waste and Environmental Injustice

• Waste disproportionately burdens communities of color and low-income communities

• Connecticut is not alone: 80% of incinerators in U.S. are in Environmental Justice communities

• Incinerator closure is necessary but not sufficient: large transfer stations and landfills don’t fix the problem

Unit-Based Pricing Offers a Path Toward Equity
SMART is Proven Effective

10,000 communities and growing:

• Worcester, MA: 47% waste reduction
  40% increase in recycling rate

• Needham, MA: 50% waste reduction
  30% increase in recycling rate

• Vernon, VT: 56% waste reduction
  recycling collection doubled

Sources: WasteZero, PAYT Success Stories: Worcester, MA; Massachusetts DEP, Case Study: Town of Needham Pay-As-You-Throw Drop Off Program; NEWMOA, Municipal Solid Waste Pay-As-You-Throw Case Study: Vernon, VT
SMART is a Powerful Educator

Assign a Value and People Pay Attention

- SMART → 21% reduction overall in waste + recycling
  - People make different choices
- 98% compliance after implementation period
  - People follow the rules
- Financial incentives make us pay attention to our waste → they can help us reduce waste and understand what happens to our waste

SMART Supports Other Solutions

Unit-based pricing helps drive diversion to:
• Organics composting
• Modernized bottle bill
• Better recycling through EPR for packaging

Data source: Connecticut DEEP, 2015 CT Statewide Waste Characterization Study
SMART Supports Other Solutions

Organics Composting 779,000 tons per year

- Complete ban on organic waste in MSW + unit-based pricing together drive adoption of universal curbside composting

Data source: Connecticut DEEP, 2015 CT Statewide Waste Characterization Study
SMART Supports Other Solutions

Bottle Bill Modernization

75,000 tons per year

• 10¢ deposit on all beverage containers + unit-based pricing can keep these containers out of CT’s incinerators

Data source: Connecticut DEEP, 2015 CT Statewide Waste Characterization Study
SMART Supports Other Solutions

EPR for packaging 743,000 tons per year

• Incentivizes reusable and recyclable packaging and funds collection and processing

• Unit-based pricing drives diversion

Data source: Connecticut DEEP, 2015 CT Statewide Waste Characterization Study
Financial Impacts Of Unit-Based Pricing
SMART Saves Cities Money

- Worcester, MA: saved more than $10 million over 20 years
- Vernon, VT: bag sales revenue has almost entirely offset hauling and disposal fees
- Malden, MA: has saved almost $2.5 million through UBP

These savings can be reinvested directly into the community

Sources: WasteZero, PAYT Success Stories: Worcester, MA; NEWMOA, Municipal Solid Waste Pay-As-You-Throw Case Study: Vernon, VT; Massachusetts DEP, Case Study: City of Malden Pay-As-You-Throw Program
Impact on Low-Income Households

Bag fees do not need to be a regressive tax:

• Cities and towns can provide reduced-price or free bags
  • **Malden, MA:** uses Community Development Block Grant money to buy bags for income-eligible residents
  • Communities could provide a set number of bags to eligible households each year
  • Bag systems provide a more transparent cost environment, especially in rental buildings

SMART Is Zero Waste In Practice

Unit-based pricing helps address disproportionate waste burdens, saves money, and moves us closer to a world without burning or burying trash

Source: Olivia Synoracki, Maddie Dennis, & Olivia Pecini, To Bury or Burn our Trash? That’s the Wrong Question, https://www.clf.org/blog/to-bury-or-to-burn-our-trash/