



DATE: February 26, 2020
TO: Waste Management Authority Board
BY: Jeff Becerra, Communications Manager
SUBJECT: AB 619: New Reusable Container Law for California

SUMMARY

In 2019, the California legislature passed AB 619, which allows consumers to bring their own reusable containers to restaurants for takeout (although participation by restaurants is optional). The new law is designed to reduce the proliferation of single-use disposable food ware. At the February 26 WMA meeting, staff will provide an overview of the law, and implications for local restaurants and potential reusable food ware policy in Alameda County.

DISCUSSION

AB 619 amends existing California Retail Food Code, which provides for the regulation of health and sanitation standards for retail food facilities. The new state law clarifies existing health code laws, ensuring that the public can bring reusable containers to restaurants for takeout. The law also allows temporary food facilities at events to serve customers in reusable containers rather than single-use disposables. However, AB 619 does not require restaurants to accept reusable containers – the practice remains optional – but it does clarify the safe food handling guidelines for how to deal with them.

The law now gives restaurants the option to fill customer containers as long as they are either isolated from the serving surface or the surface is sanitized after each use. StopWaste staff has been informally creating an inventory of local restaurants that allow the use of reusable containers. Staff intends to expand its outreach to restaurants and consumers on how best to take advantage of this new law next fiscal year as part of the reusable pilot project.

RECOMMENDATION

This item is for information only.