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Ways and Means Committee

Education Subcommittee

Election Law Subcommittee



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony of Delegate Alice Cain
Before the House Ways and Means Committee**

**In Support of HB1450
Education - Food Waste Grant Program - Established**

March 6, 2020

1:00pm

Chair Kaiser, Vice Chair Washington, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of a bill that is designed to be a true win-win. It fights hunger and reduces the environmental impact of wasting food.

At a time when 1 in 7 children in Maryland regularly go hungry,¹ and 40 percent of food produced in the U.S. is uneaten,² it is important to figure out every possible way to reduce hunger. This bill will help those children by encouraging schools to share surplus food with hunger insecure children, their families, and local food banks.

Surplus here refers to packaged and unopened foods, fruit with a peel or skin, and packaged dairy or meat products that are kept refrigerated. Surplus food is common in schools as many use a serving model in which students are required to take food, without being given a choice. These foods can be recovered and reserved or donated based on USDA guidelines.

Food waste makes up almost 15 percent of the total waste generated in Maryland, 88% of which goes to landfills³. This bill helps with that as well.

Specifically, this bill creates a new grant program for which public schools or school districts can apply to address hunger among students, reduce food waste, and improve students' environmental literacy about food composting and waste reduction through the following:

- Providing for methods for schools to collect foods that are currently being thrown away, and instead, to serve them during after-school activities or the following day
- Sending food to food banks or to families who wish to take the food home
- Supporting school projects that incorporate environmental best practices, such as waste reduction, composting, gardening, water conservation, and schoolyard habitats

¹ <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/maryland>

² <https://www.peninsuladailynews.com/news/lawmakers-aim-to-create-plan-to-cut-food-waste-by-50-percent/>

³ <https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/LAND/RecyclingandOperationsprogram/Pages/FoodScraps.aspx>

- Supporting relevant professional development for teachers, administrators, and cafeteria and/or janitorial staff
- Assisting with transportation to food donation centers and composting sites

This bill is based on a bill enacted in Washington State last year, which sets the goal of reducing food waste by 50% in the state by 2030.⁴ It will annually result in nearly 400,000 tons of food being redistributed to families and a reduction of carbon dioxide that equates to 184,000 fewer gallons of gas being burned.⁵

We can have a similar impact here in Maryland. Already, food waste reduction and composting programs are active throughout the state. My panel is going to share about the proactive work being done in Frederick and Montgomery counties. Joe Richardson estimates that these funds could impact an additional 50,000 students and annually reduce food waste by a half a million pounds.⁶

Lastly, this bill has broad support, including from:

- Advocates for Children and Youth
- Baltimore City Public Schools
- Casa de Maryland
- Frederick County Executive, Jan Gardiner
- Frederick County Public Schools
- Friends of the Earth
- Healthy School Food Maryland
- League of Conservation Voters
- Montgomery County Food Council
- Partnership to End Childhood Hunger (represents thirteen organizations)

I also have a stack of dozens of mostly handwritten letters of support from students currently participating in food waste reduction programs. Some of their quotes include:

“This bill is important because some kids don’t have enough food, while people are throwing away food from lunch. Some kids will just throw away milk and fruit.”

- Sophia, a 5th grader at Butterfly Ridge Elementary

“I like composting because it keeps our earth safe.”

- Declan, a 1st grader at Urbana Elementary

“I think composting will help our community because you don’t waste food and you use it in different life cycles.”

- Emerson, a 2nd grader at Centerville Elementary

I respectfully urge a favorable report on this bill.

⁴ <https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=1114&Year=2019>

⁵ Washington State Dept of Ecology <https://ecology.wa.gov/Waste-Toxics/Reducing-recycling-waste/Organic-materials/Food-waste-prevention/Food-waste-plan>

⁶ This figure comes from data provided by Frederick County Schools, currently piloting compost and waste reduction and Joe’s estimate that this grant could support up to 75 schools.