



Maryland SB 483

Solid Waste Management – Organics Recycling and Waste Diversion – Food Residuals

Recommended Position:

Support_____ Support with Amendment_____ Oppose__X___ No Position_____

The Maryland School Nutrition Association (MdSNA) represents the thousands of school food service employees across the State of Maryland who continue to serve on the front lines during the pandemic to feed students in Maryland. As President of MdSNA, this testimony is presented to provide them a voice.

School foodservice departments throughout the State work to ensure that all food is prepared and served in a sanitary and efficient manner so as not to create food loss due to over-production or incorrect handling. Records are kept on meal trends and daily production of food is batch-cooked, so over production of meals is kept to a minimum. Through extensive sanitation training, staff are taught how to reheat leftovers in a safe manner so they may be offered as an additional meal selection. Our food production remnants are kept at the utmost minimum, resulting in very small amounts of food waste that could be composted.

There is much to be said about “plate waste”, or uneaten food, on the trays of the students who receive a school lunch. In order to reduce food loss of school breakfast and lunch, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) issued guidance in 2016, to all child nutrition programs, to begin “Share Tables” in their programs. These are stations where children may return whole food or beverage items they choose not to eat, if it is in compliance with local and State health and food safety codes. These food and beverage

items are then available to other children who may want additional servings. The process provides additional nutrition for students and reduces food waste.

Local schools do not have control over waste generated from home-packed meals. If the food amounts do raise to the level indicated in HB264, the processing of that waste will provide a financial hardship on the already under-funded local school systems.

Labor costs will increase as there will need to be someone in the school assigned to make sure that the children are disposing of food in the correct container. The building service workers (custodial) will need to spend additional labor hours in the collection and transportation of the food for processing.

Schools will face increased equipment costs, such as food disposal containers and additional sanitation needs. If a compost company is contracted, the school food service department will incur an additional cost.

As part of the overall school team that works to support the education of children by serving nutritious and healthy meals, food service departments are not in the business to develop organic recycling systems on-site (pg. 4, line 2); a true financial burden that we are not able to undertake with our limited funding.

This bill would create an undue hardship on the 24 food service entities in Maryland. Rest assured, our industry is committed to finding new and innovative ways to reduce food waste while continuing to provide the proper nutrition to students throughout the State.

Thank you for your time and attention to review this testimony.

Terri E. Smith, SNS
President, Maryland School Nutrition Association