



## TESTIMONY FOR HB0150

### Public Schools - Grant Program to Reduce and Compost School Waste

**Bill Sponsor:** Delegate Charkoudian

**Committee:** Ways and Means

**Organization Submitting:** Maryland Legislative Coalition

**Person Submitting:** Cecilia Plante, co-chair

**Position:** FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB0150 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

Maryland wastes tons of food each year and only a small percentage of it is diverted and kept out of landfills or incinerators. This is a source of greenhouse gas emissions and pollution that we can remediate by the simple expedient of composting.

This bill creates a competitive grant program to support school-based initiatives to prevent, reduce, and compost pre- and post-consumer food waste.

Initiatives can include education for both staff and parents and training on food waste reduction. It also allows for the development of innovative systems to maximize opportunities to serve food that has already been prepared such as during after school activities or as take-home meals and supports contracts with commercial composters and the purchase of on-site composting bins.

The primary goals of these initiatives is to feed hungry students and reduce plate waste before the food becomes inedible. Allowing edible food to go to waste creates missed opportunities in the school food value chain. 1 in 7 children in Maryland face hunger. Diverting otherwise wasted food to these children could be an essential source of nutrition.

Additionally, keeping food waste out of landfills would reduce the production of methane, a greenhouse gas that is 86 x more potent than carbon dioxide in its first 20 years of release to the atmosphere. In contrast, compost is a valuable soil amendment that enhances soil fertility, soil water-holding capacity, soil organic matter, and soil structure. In addition to farming and gardens, compost can be utilized for managing stormwater run-off and preventing soil erosion (for example, via rain gardens, green roofs, bioswales, compost filter socks, and other "green infrastructure" projects.

This is an elegant solution to a vexing problem that will help feed more people and solve a critical waste issue.

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.