

Oral Testimony

Good afternoon Committee members.

I am here to speak in favor of HOUSE BILL 150 sponsored by Delegate Charkoudian. My name is Angelina Xu and I am a sophomore at Richard Montgomery High School in Montgomery County. With my partner Advika, I am a co-founder of the youth-led environmental organization named Compostology. Not only do we advocate for schools' food waste to be diverted from the trash to composting facilities, but we focus on food recovery as a whole.

Ever since I was a first-grader at Clarksburg Elementary School, I have been shocked by the massive mountains of food waste that was produced each lunch in the cafeteria. My friends at the table would leave banana peels and the ends of bread pieces, and then dump it all into the big black garbage bins at the end because that was all we had. What was confusing for me was that I had friends that were FARMS students and relied on school-based meals. However, with every unopened carrot packet or chip bag that went in the garbage bin, I couldn't understand why our schools did not have a system that would assist low-income students.

From our experiences starting food recovery programs at *four elementary and middle schools*, we have found that students are looking for hands-on opportunities to make a change in this world. Our school system has repeatedly told its students over the years that they are going to be the generation that will change the world, but our students are currently relegated to only hearing of problems such as climate change and food insecurity in the classroom.

House Bill 150 will increase equity by giving grants for food waste recovery programs to low-income schools that would have never had access otherwise. It gives students not only a voice in their system, but the power to commit to daily habits that build up to something greater than themselves — something that will improve the lives of their classmates around them, and the world as a whole around them. When we started a food recovery program at Clarksburg Elementary School, the most impactful part of it was seeing each student feel proud for helping their planet.

For all of these reasons and many more, please support House Bill 150 and support a transition toward food recovery in Maryland. Thank you.