

Committee: House Ways and Means

Testimony on: HB 0150 Public Schools: Grant Program to Reduce and Compost School Waste

Organization: Environmental Justice Ministry Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church

Submitting: Nanci Wilkinson, Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church Environmental Justice Ministry

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: January 27, 2022

The Environmental Justice Ministry of the Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church strongly supports HB 0150 that will, through the Maryland Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education (MAEOE), select and award grants to aid schools in developing programs for reducing and composting school waste. Further, the Governor under this legislation must appropriate at least \$500,000 for the program, a portion of which may be used to cover administrative costs.

As a faith community, the Environmental Justice Ministry holds the interdependence of man and nature. Clean air is an environmental human right which these grants will support. The funding of HB 0150 will enable Maryland public schools to reduce food waste with composting as a clean option for disposal of food waste. This process will enable school communities to reduce the use of landfills and incineration for food waste disposal and thus support cleaner air among schools and the communities at large. Landfills and incineration produce huge amounts of toxins that daily affect children and citizens throughout the state. Food waste in landfills produces methane, a greenhouse gas that is 86 times 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).

Please vote favorable for this important legislation.

Nanci Wilkinson

Environmental Justice Ministry Team

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