



**HB 150 - SUPPORT**

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

Ways and Means Committee

January 27th, 2022

Dear Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee:

World Wildlife Fund (WWF) supports HB 150 as part of its mission to conserve nature and reduce pressing threats to the diversity of life on Earth. Our Food Loss and Waste Initiative partners with governments, the private sector, local producers, and schools to cut food waste from farm to fork in half by 2030, in alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 12.3.

Each year, between 30-40% of all food in the US is unsold or uneaten. That's \$408 billion worth of food—roughly 2% of US GDP—and about 4% of US GHG emissions. Most becomes food waste, heading straight to landfill, incineration, down the drain, or it's left in the fields to be tilled back under. All while millions face hunger and our ecosystems are degraded. This issue was exacerbated as the COVID-19 pandemic created substantial disruptions in the food system. Farmers lost markets as businesses shut down, grocery shelves sat empty, food pantry lines ran for miles as a spotlight was shone on the gaps in our systems; even more food was lost as food insecurity grew. Addressing this challenge is essential to building a regenerative and resilient food system that helps mitigate climate change, reverses nature loss, and feeds more people.

Businesses, government agencies, funders, and many others are already taking important steps to address this challenge—and acceleration is needed. In the US alone, nearly 80.6 million tons of food is unsold or uneaten annually, and food is the single largest input by weight into US municipal landfills.

Investing in infrastructure and programs that measure and prevent waste, incentivize rescue of surplus and safe excess food, and keep it out of landfills will help achieve climate gains, improve our country's soils, boost profits for farmers, and feed more people. For more information, see the Food Waste Policy Action Plan produced by

WWF and partners, and supported by a growing number of businesses, municipalities, and NGOs at <https://foodwasteactionplan.org/>.

As part of this work, we partner directly with schools across the country, including Montgomery County Public Schools, to help students discover the impact of food waste through experiential learning. Students engage with an integrated science and math conservation lesson plan, which highlights the natural resources and biodiversity connections between the food system and food waste. A central idea of our program is to leverage food waste as a tangible issue to educate students about the wider impacts of the food system, and inspire them to help drive behavior change in their homes and communities.

Through a focus on measurement and research-backed food waste interventions as part of this work with schools, we hope to further develop evidence and reporting on school cafeteria food waste to inform policymakers and practitioners about the value of food waste measurement and reduction in schools and elsewhere.

HB 150 is the type of legislation we need to help students and schools learn about and reduce the impacts of our food system and food waste.