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MAYOR

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HB 150

January 27, 2022

TO: Members of the Ways & Means Committee
FROM: Natasha Mehu, Director of Government Relations
RE: HOUSE BILL 150 – Public Schools – Grant Program to Reduce & Compost Food Waste
POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 150.

House Bill 150 would establish a grant program to reduce and compost school waste for county Boards of Education and public schools. Grant applications will be reviewed and selected by the Maryland association for Environmental and Outdoor Education and awarded by the State Department of Education.

The Baltimore City Department of Public Works supports the funding opportunities presented in the proposed legislation for food waste diversion. As part of the Baltimore Food Waste Recovery Strategy, located at Baltimore Food Waste & Recovery Strategy/Baltimore Office of Sustainability (baltimoresustainability.org), the City has goals to attain 90% food and recyclable waste diversion in Baltimore City K-12 schools by 2040, and to create a supportive culture for food waste reduction and diversion in K-12 students, faculty and staff. These goals include strategies to pilot food waste reduction programs at 10-20 schools, implement outreach campaigns, introduce garden and compost concepts into the classroom, and support programs that compensate faculty/staff that maintain school gardens and food waste programs.

Grants like those outlined in House Bill 150 are crucial to helping food waste reduction projects get off the ground and gain momentum. The Food Matters program is a collaborative effort to reduce food waste in Baltimore through source reduction, food rescue, and food scraps recycling. The initiative is funded by the NRDC and the Rockefeller Foundation, and the effort is a large part of the City's commitment to reduce half of all wasted food generated in the city by 2030.

The funds allow Baltimore to implement community-led solutions and programs. The program has successfully opened food scrap drop-off locations, distributed educational materials, and hosted composting workshops across the city.

The Department of Public Works collaborates with Baltimore City Public Schools on food waste reduction efforts. The grant program such as the one outlined in the proposed legislation will assist those efforts to build a community-based response to food waste produced in city schools. Providing students with the opportunity to compost and learn about food waste will encourage future food waste prevention. If approved, House Bill 150 and the authorizing funds will lead to progress toward behavior and systemic change that will build healthier students, community relationships, and food waste reduction.

We respectfully request a **favorable** report on House Bill 150.