



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB 150— PUBLIC SCHOOLS- GRANT PROGRAM TO REDUCE AND COMPOST
SCHOOL WASTE

TESTIMONY OF DELEGATE LORIG CHARKOUDIAN

JANUARY 27, 2022

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

In September 2015, the U.S. set a national goal to reduce food waste by 50% by the year 2030¹. However, in Maryland almost a million tons of food waste is generated each year with only 15.5% of these scraps being diverted². The remainder is sent to the landfill or incinerators where it produces large quantities of a highly potent greenhouse gas, methane.

This legislation creates a competitive grant program to support school-based initiatives to prevent and reduce pre-consumer food waste and compost post-consumer food waste. This bill will support Maryland's ability to meet the national food waste reduction target.

1 in 7 children in Maryland face hunger and school based meals are essential in providing dependable sources of nutrition. Therefore, these grants will first and foremost maximize opportunities to serve edible food to students. Funds can be used to support initiatives to expand training of school staff on food waste reduction during standard school meal times and reduce plate waste in cafeterias. These waste reduction measures will create new opportunities to feed vulnerable student populations as untouched, prepared food can be utilized for other hunger relief measures such as after-school take-home meals.

This legislation will also provide funds for students and schools to explore innovative techniques for managing school-based post-consumer food waste. These projects can include investments in school-based composting infrastructure, contracts with commercial composters, and initiatives such as green infrastructure projects which will utilize the compost that is created.

Encouraging food waste diversion and composting in our K-12 schools is an important investment in our students and communities and an important step in reducing our emissions from landfills and meeting our food waste reduction targets.

I respectfully request a favorable report on HB150.

¹ <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2015/09/16/usda-and-epa-join-private-sector-charitable-organizations-set>

² <https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/land/recyclingandoperationsprogram/pages/foodscraps.aspx>

