



Maryland Chapter
P.O. Box 278
Riverdale, MD 20738

Committee: Environment and Transportation

Testimony on: HB1139 – Solid Waste Disposal & Diversion and On-Farm Composting & Compost Use

Position: Support

Hearing Date: March 8, 2023

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club urges you to support HB1139. This bill would create an Environmental Stewardship Fund to finance two grant programs aimed at increasing waste diversion, recycling, and composting infrastructure, financed by a \$2 per ton surcharge on waste disposal. The owner or operator of each refuse disposal facility is responsible for collecting the disposal surcharge at their facility and submitting the collected monies to the State. A quarter of the Fund would be allocated to the On-Farm Composting & Compost Use Grant Program, supporting farmers' investments, development, and implementation of on-farm composting and compost use. Another 25 % would be allocated to a new Waste Diversion Grant Program, providing competitive waste reduction grants throughout the state to businesses, schools, non-profit organizations, farmers, and others for waste diversion efforts. The remaining half of the Fund would be allocated to counties (including Baltimore City) for waste diversion efforts. An opt-out option would be available for counties that would prefer to set up their own surcharge-to-grants program; this would give counties more flexibility and control over their own resources and programs should they choose to opt-out of eligibility for Waste Reduction or On-Farm Composting grants from the statewide fund.

Reducing waste and its disposal in landfills and incinerators is one of several key strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and fighting climate change. However, success at diverting waste depends critically on having in place the infrastructure for expanded composting and recycling. It requires investments in infrastructure by local government, farmers, businesses, schools, nonprofits, and other local entities.

HB1139 would generate the resources for these needed investments, while discouraging waste disposal. Solid waste surcharges ranging from 50 cents per ton to \$13 per ton at landfills, incinerators, and transfer stations have been funding recycling and waste reduction programs in Indiana, Minnesota, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin, as well as in local jurisdictions, since as early as the 1980's.¹ These investments pay for themselves, by reducing the amount of waste disposed.

Waste diversion investments are critical, and a waste disposal surcharge has proven to be a highly effective way of funding them across the country. The Sierra Club respectfully requests a favorable report on HB1139.

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¹ Jones, Sophia. 2022. "Surcharges on Waste Disposal Fund Composting," *Institute for Local Self Reliance*.
<https://ilsr.org/disposal-surcharges-fund-composting/>.

Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America's oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.