

**TESTIMONY TO THE MARYLAND SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION,
ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

SB0808 – Anaerobic Digestion Technology - Coordination and Guidance

Position: Unfavorable

March 5, 2024 Public Hearing

Sophia Jones, Policy Lead, Composting for Community Initiative, sjones@ilsr.org

Institute for Local Self-Reliance 1200 18th Street, NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20036

Dear Members of the Committee,

My name is Sophia Jones and I am submitting testimony **in opposition of SB 808** on behalf of the Institute for Local Self-Reliance (ILSR), a national nonprofit that has been working to advance infrastructure for organic materials processing in Maryland and across the country for decades.

We question the narrow focus on anaerobic digestion in SB 808, as if it's the sole technology or system to handle the state's organic materials. Anaerobic digestion and composting are both solutions to recycle and repurpose organics, however **this bill would give unfair advantage and priority to advancing anaerobic digestion over composting.**

To be clear, we are supporters of anaerobic digestion as an organics management option. We are primarily concerned about the likelihood of producing contaminated products, an issue more commonly prevalent in centralized facilities (both anaerobic digesters and compost facilities) that accept contaminated feedstocks and that are coupled with depackagers. When it comes to quality soil amendments, bigger is not always better. See ILSR's [Hierarchy to Reduce Food Waste & Grow Community](#) (included also as an attachment).

Moreover, while the quality of compost products is regulated in Maryland ([COMAR 15.18.04.05](#)), there are no quality standards for products of anaerobic digestion, potentially encouraging anaerobic digestion processes that create low-quality and contaminated byproducts that jeopardize Maryland soils.

ILSR served on the Yard Waste, Food Residuals, and Other Organic Materials Diversion and Infrastructure Study Group from 2018 to 2019, which studied organics management options, including anaerobic digestion. Many of that Study Group's recommendations have yet to be addressed.

Maryland has ambitious emission and waste reduction goals that we must work diligently to meet. Policies creating clear permitting pathways and markets for soil amendments are needed to

support development of diverse and decentralized infrastructure for both composting and anaerobic digestion.

We urge an unfavorable vote on SB 808.

Sincerely,



Sophia Jones
Policy Lead, Composting for Community Initiative
Institute for Local Self Reliance

Attachment: [Hierarchy to Reduce Food Waste and Grow Community](#), Institute for Local Self-Reliance

