

Testimony for SB56: Food Waste and Solid Waste Reduction – Grants, Fund, and Surcharge (2-5-24)

This testimony is to urge a favorable report with amendment on SB56: Food Waste and Solid Waste Reduction – Grants, Fund, and Surcharge.

A major limiting factor for the expansion of infrastructure and programs reducing food waste and recycling organics is cost. Maryland has no dedicated funding streams for reducing and diverting food waste. This legislation would address this significant need.

Maryland has made great strides reducing methane emissions from landfills, with more stringent methane regulations on landfills. Controlling the amount of methane from a landfill is a greatly important step, but another effective strategy is to reduce the amount of methane-producing organic waste from entering the landfill in the first place.

I have been involved as a volunteer in trying to establish new infrastructure to divert food waste, and I can testify first-hand to the difficulty of accomplishing this without dedicated funding.

Funding practices like cold storage for food rescue, on-farm compost, school grants, and upcycling through a modest \$2 per ton surcharge on waste disposed of at landfills and incinerators will provide tangible benefits and fund Maryland's goals and its unfunded programs, like school grants for food waste reduction and composting, which passed in 2022 but requires an annual appropriation.

The four grant programs proposed in this legislation would expand the waste reduction infrastructure that Maryland badly needs.

Amendment: Delegate Boyce has a very similar bill still in drafting that adds significant improvements to the intent and purpose of SB56.

I urge that the Committee conform SB56 to the language of Delegate Boyce's bill to incorporate these changes, and then give a favorable report.

Sincerely,

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