



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

House Bill 1318

Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Fund and Grant Programs – Established

Date: March 26, 2024

To: Education, Energy, & the Environment Committee

Position: **Favorable**

From: Matt Stegman
MD Staff Attorney

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** HB 1318 which establishes the Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Fund, a special fund administered by Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), to support the On-Farm Organics Diversion and Recycling Grant Program administered by the Department of Agriculture (MDA) and the Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Program administered by MDE. Money credited to the Fund is intended to supplement, not replace, other funding sources that may support these programs.

Food waste affects climate change.

The diversion of food waste from incinerators and landfills through composting helps minimize the amount of carbon dioxide and methane released into the atmosphere by these traditional methods of waste management. Lower greenhouse gas emissions improve air quality, reduce impacts to human health, and increase resilience to the effects of climate change.

Soil health is key to the future of agriculture.

Well-managed composting of waste adds biologically rich material to soils, feeding essential micro-organisms and fungi that improve soil health and enhance production of healthy, nutritious food. Healthier soils increase water holding capacity, facilitate nutrient cycling, and reduce soil loss, helping farmers maintain their land and minimizing risks to water quality and the Chesapeake Bay.

This legislation will improve soil health, help fight the effects of climate change, and transition Maryland to a more effective, equitable, and environmentally sound waste management system. The bill, as introduced, would have supported the Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Fund with a modest surcharge on solid waste disposal. While CBF is disappointed that provision was struck from the bill, we fully support the creation of the On-Farm Organics Diversion and Recycling Grant and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant programs and are hopeful the Moore Administration and General Assembly will find resources to fund them moving forward.

CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on HB 1318.

For more information, please contact Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney, at mstegman@cbf.org.

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The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With over 200,000 members and e-subscribers, including 71,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.