



"Cultivating a collaborative, sustainable, and equitable food system for all Maryland communities."

February 5, 2024
2024 SESSION SUPPORT TESTIMONY
SB 0056: Food Waste and Solid Waste Reduction - Grants, Fund, and Surcharge

BILL: SB 0056: Food Waste and Solid Waste Reduction - Grants, Fund, and Surcharge
COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment
POSITION: Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 0056

Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement for the record **in support of Senate Bill 0056**.

This letter is submitted on behalf of the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council. The Food System Resiliency Council was established by the Maryland General Assembly during the 2021 legislative session to bring together 33 appointed council members from across the state, all with different points of entry and expertise to work toward a more resilient food system and address the food insecurity crisis due to COVID-19.

One of the key mandates of this Council is to develop equity and sustainability policy recommendations to increase the long-term resiliency of Maryland's food system. In the November 2023 Food System Resiliency Council Report to the Maryland Legislature, we recommended increasing the capacity for diverted organic materials. Currently, minimal facilities are available for food scrap diversion. Increasing food diversion and education on food waste reduction will help increase our food system resiliency and strengthen the food waste recovery infrastructure, building on emerging practices already established in the State. Food waste occur across the supply chain. It is important that legislation addresses problems throughout the process, with resources allocated to organic diversion, composting, food rescue, education, linking food waste to hunger, source separation, and upcycling.

Increased food resiliency can be achieved is by **passing SB 0056**, which will establish funds to provide infrastructure, programming, and education resources to prevent food waste. The passing of SB 0056 would create new resources for food waste prevention in schools and communities. Provide grants for programs and infrastructure to rescue food for direct food assistance, thereby, feeding people directly and increasing food security while decreasing greenhouse gas emissions. Upcycling food to decrease food being wasted and increase our circular bioeconomy through remanufacturing. Create grants for developing on-farm composting, school composting, and increase compost use to recycle nutrients from food and increase soil fertility.

Over one-third of the food produced in the United States is never eaten, wasting the calories and production resources used to grow food that could have fed more than 150 million people each year. The wasted food comprises 1/4 of our landfill content. It is stated by USEPA that reducing 50% of the



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food waste going to US landfills would be the equivalent of eliminating the greenhouse gas emissions from 21 coal-fired power plants or 15 million homes' energy use for a year.

Passing SB 0056 will benefit Maryland's Food System, create resources for important food system resiliency initiatives throughout the supply chain, and increase our circular bioeconomy. Each year, 119 billion lbs. of food is wasted in the US, equivalent to 1 lb./person/day, 130 billion meals, and at an economic value is \$408 billion per year. With 13.5 million US households being food-insecure at some time, there is a need to reduce this food waste impact. The SB 0056 legislation will create the resources needed to execute these important initiatives.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our support of SB 0056.

Michael J. Wilson
Co-Chair, Maryland Food System Resiliency Council