



February 5, 2024

**2024 SESSION SUPPORT TESTIMONY
SB0056: Food Waste and Solid Waste Reduction**

BILL: SB0056: Food Waste and Solid Waste Reduction - Grants, Fund, and Surcharge

COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment

POSITION: Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 0056

BILL ANALYSIS: Establishing the On-Farm Organic Diversion and Composting Grant Program to award grants to eligible entities to assist with the costs of developing and implementing on-farm composting and compost use, food waste prevention, and food rescue projects; requiring the Department of the Environment to use funds from the Reduce, Recycle, Remanufacture Fund to support the Grant Program to Reduce and Compost School Waste; authorizing the Department to establish a statewide solid waste disposal surcharge; etc.

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony, and thank you to Senator Hester for introducing this important legislation. The Montgomery County Food Council (MCFC) urges you to **SUPPORT** this bill to establish the On-Farm Organic Diversion and Composting Grant Program to award grants to assist with the costs of developing and implementing on-farm composting and compost use, food waste prevention, and food rescue projects.

This legislation addresses a critical need to expand Maryland's infrastructure for food waste prevention, edible food recovery, and diversion and recycling. Expanding on-farm composting and the availability of high-quality compost supports agriculture in Maryland by building healthier soils. Grants from this program will provide community benefits, including priority to projects that serve farms owned or operated by socially disadvantaged individuals or that engage small or beginning farming operations. Grants could also



provide funding for much needed cold storage infrastructure, an investment that would not only support food recovery, but also local growers, food assistance providers, and residents. This legislation provides a funding mechanism to help Maryland meet goals for climate, food security, and food system resilience.

According to the USDA 30-40% of food in the United States goes to waste¹. At the same time, the recently released Montgomery County Strategic Plan to End Childhood Hunger states that 14% of Montgomery County students are food insecure². Improved food waste and recovery infrastructure has the potential to greatly improve overall food security within the State of Maryland. Food recovery infrastructure can also have huge impacts on climate change. More than 85% of greenhouse gas emissions from landfilled food waste result from activities prior to food entering a landfill,³ which points to the importance of a strong infrastructure around food waste and recovery.

This legislation would promote composting within the State of Maryland and increase the efforts to divert useful materials from disposal and support local communities through maximizing the use of resources, increasing food security, reducing pollution, and improving the economy . **For these reasons, the Montgomery County Food Council supports SB056 and urges a FAVORABLE REPORT for this bill.**

The Montgomery County Food Council is a nonprofit organization that serves as the primary connection point for businesses, nonprofits, government agencies, and residents around food system issues in our County. We bring together over 2,000 local and regional partners in community-wide education, advocacy, and capacity building initiatives. Our work cultivates a more resilient, sustainable, and equitable local food system by enhancing food access for the over 100,000 at risk for hunger, expanding food education opportunities for all residents, supporting our County's farms and food and beverage businesses, and addressing the impact of local food production, distribution, consumption and recycling on our natural resources

For more information, please contact Michelle Caruso, Director of Policy and Partnerships, at the email and phone number below.

¹ ["Why Should We Care about Food Waste?"](#) USDA

² [Strategic Plan to End Childhood Hunger](#). Montgomery County, Maryland.

³ ["Preventing Wasted Food at Home."](#) EPA.

