

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

HB 1318 – Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Fund and Grant Programs

Position: Favorable

March 26, 2024 Hearing

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

[Institute for Local Self-Reliance](https://www.ilsr.org/), 1200 18th Street, NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20036

Dear Members of the Committee,

The Institute for Local Self-Reliance (ILSR) supports HB 1318 and encourages the committee to pass this bill to establish grant programs to reduce, rescue, and divert wasted food from disposal in Maryland.

Maryland's stagnant recycling rate, high landfill emissions, shrinking landfill capacity, and increasing demand for alternatives to food waste disposal indicate the need for investment into wasted food diversion in a way that benefits local communities, NOW.

HB 1318 establishes two grant programs to provide support for infrastructure, programs, and education on wasted food diversion in Maryland through the (1) Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Program, the (2) On-Farm Organics Diversion and Recycling Grant Program. ILSR worked closely with the Maryland Departments of Environment and Agriculture on the details of the two grant programs to ensure they filled programmatic gaps and addressed Maryland's needs.

We are disappointed in the removal of the funding mechanism (\$2/ton surcharge on waste disposed) from the original version of HB 1318, especially as this mechanism is currently successful in at least 8 other states. Hopefully the State will seek federal funding to fill the gap until a funding mechanism is established. With funding, these grant programs will keep organics out of landfills and incinerators, where harmful greenhouse gases are produced, and help move Maryland toward its goal of 60% emissions reductions by 2031 and net-zero in 2045. We strongly support the intentions behind the grant programs and hope that appropriate funding can be established in the near future.

Given adequate funding, the grant programs established would not only support projects and infrastructure to rescue food, recycle organics, and reduce foodservice waste, but also the necessary education, technical assistance, labor, and wages to make projects effective. Priority funding is dedicated to projects that directly benefit local Maryland communities, particularly those overburdened and underserved, by addressing community needs, providing education, creating green jobs, providing living wages, and preventing environmental contamination.

Expansion of composting and organics recycling infrastructure and the availability of high-quality, non-contaminated compost is crucial to supporting Maryland farmers in building and maintaining healthy soils to increase soil organic matter, improve water and nutrient cycling, and grow healthy food, contributing to cleaner Maryland watersheds, increased resilience to extreme weather, and stronger Maryland food systems.

We urge the Committee to support HB 1318.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sophia Jones", written in black ink.

Sophia Jones