



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

March 25, 2024
2024 SESSION SUPPORT TESTIMONY
HB 1318: Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Fund and Grant Programs - Established

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COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment
POSITION: Testimony in Support of House Bill 1318 – with amendment

Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement for the record **in support of House Bill 1318 with an amendment that in 9–1725.3. Section (E), "A UNIT OF STATE OR LOCAL GOVERNMENT"** should be included as **"ELIGIBLE FOR A GRANT UNDER THE GRANT PROGRAM."**

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, source separation, upcycling, and exploring linkage between food waste and hunger.

A first step in increased food resiliency can be achieved is by **passing HB 1318**, which will establish a grant fund to provide infrastructure, programming, and education resources for on-farm food waste composting as well as preventing food waste and increasing food rescue efforts. The passing of HB 1318 would create an On-Farm Organics Diversion and Recycling Grant Program in the Department of Agriculture to award grants to eligible entities to develop and implement on-farm organics recycling and compost use, wasted food prevention, and food rescue. The program will also create the Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Fund to establish the Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Program in the Department of the Environment to award grants for infrastructure, programs, and education that



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reduce, rescue, and divert wasted food. These two programs would be not have dedicated funding, which hopefully will be added in future funding cycles.

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 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 HB 1318 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 HB 1318 legislation will create the programs needed to execute these important initiatives.

While the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council supports the passage of HB 1318, we do have one proposed amendment and one item of consideration for the committee. **Amendment:** In 9-1725.3. Section (E), It is unclear why "A UNIT OF STATE OR LOCAL GOVERNMENT" are now not "ELIGIBLE FOR A GRANT UNDER THE GRANT PROGRAM." It is our position that state or local governments should still be an eligible entity, with only "THAT HAS NOT OPTED OUT OF THE STATEWIDE SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL SURCHARGE" be stricken from the bill. **Item of Consideration:** it is important to acknowledge that 'Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion' is not a holistic solution to reducing food insecurity. The dignity of food insecure individuals should always be at the forefront. Food diversion efforts alone cannot solve the food system crisis nor do these efforts always align with uplifting the humanity of individuals experiencing food insecurity. There should be assurances that administrators for the Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Program uphold these principles and align with the goals of the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council to increase equity in the food system and their acknowledgement that the root causes of food system vulnerability and food insecurity are complex.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our support of HB 1318 with an amendment.

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