



February 28, 2024

**2024 SESSION SUPPORT TESTIMONY**  
**HB1318: Solid Waste Disposal**

**BILL:** HB1318: Solid Waste Disposal Surcharge and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Fund and Grant Programs - Established

**COMMITTEE:** Environment and Transportation

**POSITION:** Testimony in support of HB1318

**BILL ANALYSIS:** Establishing the On-Farm Organics Diversion and Recycling Grant Program in the Department of Agriculture to award grants to eligible entities for on-farm organics recycling and compost use, wasted food prevention, and food rescue; establishing a solid waste disposal surcharge of \$2 per ton of solid waste processed by a refuse disposal system for final disposal; establishing the Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Program in the Department of the Environment; etc.

Dear Chair Korman and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

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

This legislation addresses a critical need to expand Maryland's infrastructure around food waste prevention, edible food recovery, and diversion and recycling. Expanding on-farm composting and the availability of high-quality compost support agriculture in Maryland by improving the availability of healthier soils. Grants from this type of program present a wide array of opportunities to provide community benefits, including priority to projects that serve farms owned including projects that maximize local benefits such as job creation, job training, and inclusive hiring and leadership development practices. Grants could also provide funding for a much needed increase in cold storage infrastructure, which would support food recovery, as well as local growers, food assistance providers, and residents.



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This legislation creates a funding mechanism to help the State of Maryland meet its goals around climate, food security, and food system resilience.

According to the USDA 30-40% of food in the United States goes to waste<sup>1</sup>. At the same time, the recently released Montgomery County Strategic Plan to End Childhood Hunger states that 14% of Montgomery County students are food insecure<sup>2</sup>. 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,<sup>3</sup> which points to the importance of a strong infrastructure around food waste and recovery.

Improving infrastructure around food waste and recovery provides a multitude of benefits for the State of Maryland and this legislation takes the necessary steps to improve the overall infrastructure around programs that focus on food waste reduction. Addressing food insecurity in the state requires multiple approaches and this legislation will strengthen programming around food recovery to help Maryland residents and improve the overall food security of the state. The Food System Resiliency Council's 2023 report to the General Assembly cited the "need for an increase in organic recycling capacity to meet Maryland's needs for diverted source-separated organic materials diversion"<sup>4</sup> and suggested a disposal surcharge to provide funding to meet this need. The programs included in this legislation are solutions that have been vetted by state-appointed experts in a process supported by the legislature.

While the MCFC supports the passage of HB 1318, we do have two items of consideration for the committee:

- 1) If a local government already has a surcharge on solid waste disposal and this legislation is passed, would the revenue from this surcharge go only to the new funds proposed by this legislation? How might this affect existing programs funded by the surcharge revenue in the local jurisdiction?

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

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

<sup>3</sup> ["Preventing Wasted Food at Home."](#) EPA.

<sup>4</sup> [2023 Report to the General Assembly](#), Maryland FSRC



2) While we support the goal of reducing wasted food, it is important to recognize that it alone will not solve food insecurity. We want to ensure that the administrators of the Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Program prioritize dignity and equity, aligning with broader goals to address the complex root causes of food insecurity.

This legislation would promote composting within the State of Maryland and increase the efforts to prevent food waste and support local communities through increasing food security, and supporting local jobs and economies. **For these reasons, the Montgomery County Food Council supports HB1318 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.



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