



**MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE**

February 6, 2024

SB 56

Food Waste and Solid Waste Reduction – Grants, Fund, and Surcharge

Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) offers testimony in support of Senate Bill 56. The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state’s second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

SB 56 seeks to establish the On-Farm Organic Diversion and Composting Grant Program. This program, aimed at supporting on-farm composting and compost use, food waste prevention, and food rescue projects, reflects a responsible and sustainable approach to environmental stewardship. Pope Francis, in his encyclical “Laudato Si,” emphasizes the moral imperative for humanity to care for our common home, and initiatives such as this grant program are crucial steps towards fulfilling that responsibility.

The Catholic Church has a long-standing commitment to promoting the dignity of every person and caring for the vulnerable. Food waste is not just an environmental concern but also a social justice issue, as it denies many individuals access to basic necessities. By establishing the On-Farm Organic Diversion and Composting Grant Program, we take a significant stride toward reducing food waste and ensuring that the abundance of resources with which we are blessed is used wisely and justly.

The MCC appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 56.