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HB1318

March 1, 2024

TO: Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee

FROM: Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations

RE: House Bill 1318 – Solid Waste Disposal and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Programs – Established

POSITION: Letter of Concern

Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) supports opportunities to reduce or divert food waste from communities' waste streams as proposed in House Bill (HB) 1318 but does have some concerns regarding the imposition of a surcharge to fund this effort.

HB 1318 establishes a solid waste disposal surcharge on the final disposal of solid waste in the State. It would establish a solid waste disposal surcharge of \$2 per ton of solid waste processed by a refuse disposal system for final disposal. These surcharges would be used to establish grants for the On -The Farm Organics Diversion and Recycling Programs statewide. It will also establish the Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Funds with the interest the surcharge will be accrued. This will allow the Department of the Environment to award grants to eligible entities, for infrastructure, programs, and education that will reduce, reduce, and divert wasted food in the state.

The BCA recognizes the importance of such programs and initiatives that can help change the way in which we manage food waste. Beginning in September 2018 Baltimore City worked with the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and the Rockefeller Foundation to establish a Food Matters pilot food waste management project. With technical support provided by NRDC the City was able to award approximately \$100,000 in grants to 11 nonprofits to support reducing food waste. A support network was also developed for community composting sites. A large consumer "Save the Food" Campaign focused on educating consumers about how to avoid food waste at the household level. Today the City has a free food scrap drop-off program for residents at its five (5) residential convenience centers. Food scraps collected at the Downtown Farmers Market and Bazaar and the Waverly Farmers Market are donated to local farmers for animal feed or for composting. Major food rescue and donation organizations continue their good work to get donated food in the hands of food-insecure residents.

The BCA agrees that more needs to be done to instill a culture of reducing food waste and diverting it from disposal in landfills and incinerators. While HB 1318 could provide those opportunities, the BCA is concerned that the proposed surcharge to fund the programs may apply to some local government solid waste activities, which could cost the City an estimated \$31,000 per month.

For the above reasons, the **BCA asks the Committee to consider the potential fiscal implications on local governments while deliberating on HB1318.**

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