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*Legislative District 21*

Prince George's and  
Anne Arundel Counties

Environment and Transportation  
Committee



The Maryland House of Delegates

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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

## **HB 338**

### **State Lands Collection of Yard Waste Support**

Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and Esteemed Members of the Committee:

I am asking for your favorable report for HB 338, a bill that prohibits both state employees and contractors from using single-use plastic bags for yard waste when working on state lands and along state highways. The House passed this bill in 2024. It was not voted on by the Senate Education, Energy and Environment Committee.

Instead of single-use plastic bags, the bill requires that state employees and contractors to either use a compostable container, such as a brown paper yard waste bag, or a container that will not be discarded with the yard waste, e.g., a reusable container.

Under current Maryland law, there are no restrictions on the employment of single-use plastic bags for yard waste collection on the grounds of state buildings and along state highways.

#### **Two changes to this year's bill:**

This year's legislation incorporates an amendment that the Department of Natural Resources requested in the 2024 bill. It includes an exemption for the use of plastic bags for the removal of noxious weeds and invasive species. The Department of Natural Resources sometimes uses black plastic bags to gather these plants, which prevents them from potentially propagating and spreading seeds or pods.

The second change to the 2025 bill requires the yard waste, whether bagged or unbagged, to be disposed of at an organics recycling facility, a natural wood recycling facility, or a state facility with onsite capability to create mulch or enriched soil. The Department of Environment has confirmed that these facilities have capacity for the disposal of yard waste.

**HB 338 achieves two important environmental goals:**

First it helps to reduce single use plastic bags, which are a major source of pollution and cannot be recycled. When single-use plastic bags are used, the collected yard waste, along with the plastic bag, frequently ends up in landfill. According to the World Wildlife Fund, the bags then take up to twenty years to break down.<sup>1</sup> If the yard waste goes to a composting facility, there is a risk the plastic bag will be shredded along with the yard waste. The issue of the disintegrating plastic forces the composting facilities to either invest in imperfect plastic-screening technology, which adds both time and cost to an already slow and expensive process, or to simply produce a contaminated product.

Secondly, by requiring yard waste from state land to be taken to composting, organics recycling or mulch making facilities, it will help achieve zero waste goals. Sending yard waste to landfills means taking up space meant for solid waste that cannot be sent elsewhere.

To date, over one third of Maryland's counties have enacted similar policies for residential yard waste pickup. It is time for the state to operate under the same standards.

Thank you and I urge a favorable report on HB 338.

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<sup>1</sup> World Wildlife Fund, "The Lifecycle of Plastics," July 1, 2021