

Testimony in Support of HB429/SB599
On-Farm Organics and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Programs
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
19 February 2026

To the Chair and Committee Members:

My name is Alexandria Cooke. I live in Crofton, MD, and go to school at St. Mary's College of MD on the St. Mary's River. I urge a favorable report on HB429/SB599 On-Farm Organics and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Programs, and appreciate your consideration of this bill.

Food waste is easier to recycle than plastic, and it can be done at home by nearly anyone with the right training. It is completely unnecessary for food waste to end up in landfills at its current rate. Landfills cause the communities around them to develop cancer and asthma at rates around 50% more than average, and disproportionately affect low-income communities. This bill would give communities the funding and education they need to learn how to compost and the infrastructure to do so. This would save families money, help address food insecurity, and reduce the health risks for surrounding communities. As someone who struggles with asthma, it has impacted my life in many different areas and made it difficult for me to achieve my goals. I have had to hold back in activities like hiking and running, which I love but am unable to do anymore. I get sick more often and to a worse extent than most, and missing so much school holds me back academically. I don't believe that these communities deserve to have the families who are a part of them suffer in this way, or from any other health condition preventable from decreasing use of these landfills. That is why I support HB429/SB599 and urge you to do the same.

Thank you for your consideration, and I look to this committee to give SB0342/HB0331 a favorable report.

Sincerely,
Alexandria Cooke