



HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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The Honorable Senator Feldman, Chair
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT** of **Senate Bill 0599**: On-Farm Organics and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Programs - Established

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee:

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, organic waste—such as food scraps—accounts for approximately 30 percent of the local solid waste stream. When food waste is sent to landfills, it becomes a major source of methane (CH₄), a greenhouse gas with more than 25 times the global warming potential of carbon dioxide. Composting food waste significantly reduces methane emissions while creating valuable, soil-enriching products.

Howard County has already demonstrated leadership in this area through its Feed the Green Bin program, which enables residents to divert food waste from landfills to compost. The program currently provides weekly food waste collection to more than 58,000 households, substantially reducing landfill waste and greenhouse gas emissions.

At the same time, Howard County farmers have long been leaders in organic recycling. For generations, farmers have composted animal waste to improve soil health and farm productivity. With assistance from the Howard Soil Conservation District, farmers responsibly recycle organic waste and apply it to their fields in accordance with state nutrient management plans. These practices protect the environment, improve soil health, increase crop yields, and ultimately enhance farm profitability.

This legislation, which establishes the On-Farm Organics Diversion and Recycling Grant Program, will provide critical funding to expand and strengthen these efforts. The grant program will support on-farm organic recycling and compost utilization, wasted food prevention initiatives, and food rescue programs. These investments will reduce and divert food waste, protect our environment, and provide valuable soil amendments for agricultural use.

In short, this legislation represents a win for our community, our environment, and our farmers. For these reasons, I respectfully urge a **favorable report on SB 0599**.

Respectfully,

Calvin Ball
Howard County Executive