

Testimony in support of [HB 429/SB 599](#) - On-Farm Organics and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Programs

Hearing Date: February 24th, 2026

To the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

My name is Joanna Cleaver, I am a constituent from Frederick County, MD, and I am writing to you in support of HB 429/SB 599. I urge a favorable report on this bill.

I have a personal connection to the contents of this bill, after interning on a small farm and seeing firsthand the benefits of easy access to compost. We were lucky enough to have an existing composting program, utilizing both community food waste and partnering with other organizations to divert their waste (including wood chips). This availability of nutrient rich soil in plentiful supply was extremely beneficial to the operations of the farm. Because of the composting program, we could care for our produce without using synthetic fertilizers. This allowed us to provide hundreds of pounds of fresh food to the community and a local food bank. I hope that in the future, more farms will be able to utilize compost infrastructure.

Soil everywhere needs to be healthy and properly enriched to grow food and support our populations, and compost use is an easy way to facilitate this fertilization. By establishing grants that will assist farmers in creating on-farm compost infrastructure, as well as supporting technical assistance and training, this bill will support sustainable food systems. We cannot rely on synthetic fertilizers and other practices which are contaminating our waterways and depleting soil health, instead we must educate growers on sustainable practices that truly nourish the land and our bodies.

By increasing on-farm compost use, as well as supporting food preservation and animal food recovery, food waste will be reduced and/or diverted into a more renewable channel. This will reduce carbon emissions, save money for farmers and families, and reduce food insecurity – and this is only the tip of the iceberg. HB 429/SB 599 has my support, and I hope that it has yours as well.

Thanks for your consideration.

Best,

Joanna Cleaver