



Maryland Department of Agriculture

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Maryland Department of Agriculture Legislative Comment Date: February 24th, 2026

BILL NUMBER: SB 599
BILL TITLE: On-Farm Organics and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Programs - Established
MDA POSITION: INFORMATION

The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) respectfully submits this letter to provide context and information regarding *Senate Bill 599 - On-Farm Organics and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Programs - Established*, and appreciates the commitment of the sponsor to finding innovative opportunities to reduce food waste and generate sustainable soil amendments that improve soil health.

On-farm composting is an area of growing interest with farmers and provides both agronomic and environmental benefits. Compost can reduce chemical nutrient inputs requirements for crops, thus reducing input costs for the farm. Well managed compost provides a carbon-rich material that can increase organic matter levels and improve soil health. The diversion of food waste for on-farm composting will address state environmental goals for food waste reduction and diversion, while creating a circular economy model. Additionally, grants under the Program can enable training, education, and projects to reduce or redistribute food waste to support local communities.

The establishment of the On-Farm Organics Diversion and Recycling Grant Program at MDA would have specific challenges in funding, as a source is not outlined to sustain the program, and would require the expansion of the Conservation Grants Program to ensure projects are compliant with composting standards and general use classifications. The Department recognizes the challenges implementing this policy would pose without sustainable funding, and would request the members to consider this during deliberation.

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