

**Testimony in support of HBO429/SB599 On-Farm Organics and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Programs Senate Education, Energy and Environmental Committee  
24 February 2026**

To the Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Lauren Fanning and I am a part time resident of Saint Mary's City, MD. I am an environmental studies major at Saint Mary's College of Maryland, therefore I am very dedicated to the importance of environmental protection and conservation. I urge for the support of HBO429.

Food waste is and has been a climate crisis in the state of Maryland for many years. Maryland's 48 landfills have emitted methane equivalent to over 3.1 million metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> in 2023. Methane is 80 times more potent than carbon dioxide in the first 20 years. Recent aerial surveys revealed massive unreported methane plumes over Brown Station Road Landfill in Upper Marlboro. Food waste costs the average household \$2,913 annually, while hundreds of tons go to landfills. One in six children in Maryland also experience food insecurity. Maryland's two waste incinerators have also caused nearly \$100 million in health damages to Baltimore and D.C. residents.

The Departments of Agriculture and Environment are responsible for identifying funding for their respective grant programs and the grant programs may be funded through additional sources including funding mechanisms established in the future. The grant programs will support the Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Program, the On-Farm Organics Diversion and Recycling Grant Program, and the County Wasted Food Reduction Block Grant Program.

The bill will

- Dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions from landfills and incinerators
- Create high-quality soil amendments to improve soil and water health
- Prioritize projects benefiting underserved communities
- Address environmental justice concerns
- Support local economies through community-oriented projects
- Reduce synthetic fertilizer costs for farmers

I support HBO429 because of my environmental studies education and my dedication to protecting the environment. I have advocated for composting and sustainable agriculture programs for years and I believe that this bill can support both Maryland's climate goals and the goals of individuals like myself.

Thank you for your consideration, and I hope for your support and I look to this committee for a favorable report on HBO429.

Sincerely,

Lauren Fanning