

Frequently Asked Questions

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

What does HB 429/SB 599 do?

- The bill will create three new grant programs for:
 - (1) Reducing, rescuing, composting, and recycling wasted food (including infrastructure, operations, education, and technical assistance,) and transition away from disposable food service ware;
 - (2) On-farm organics recycling and compost use, wasted food prevention, and food rescue;
 - (3) Counties to reduce, rescue, and divert wasted food in the county.
- This bill is part of a multi-year strategy to establish grant programs and secure funding for wasted food reduction and diversion. HB 429/SB 599 will codify the grant programs, which include detailed eligibility and award priority factors that have been refined in collaboration with a wide array of stakeholders over 5 years.

What are the economic benefits to Marylanders?

- According to the EPA, the average US family of four loses \$3,000 per year to uneaten food. This bill will develop support for households, businesses, and schools to save resources and navigate alternatives to food waste.
- This bill would provide direct investments in local businesses, develop more local jobs, and establish alternatives to avoid reliance on disposal of organics.
- Investment in robust and locally-driven food waste reduction and organics management infrastructure is crucial as landfill capacity shrinks and disposal costs rise. The expected increases to disposal costs will be mitigated by the availability of alternatives across the board.

What are the broader benefits to Marylanders?

- The benefits to Marylanders are beyond just economic. Projects using grant funding will bolster food security, local communities, healthy soils, and a clean environment.
- This bill prioritizes projects that use processes to create clean, minimally-contaminated soil amendments. This will ensure that funded organics recycling and composting projects are prioritizing high quality end products, with minimal contamination from microplastics and PFAS, that can be confidently used to grow food and build soil health.
- With prioritization of projects that are locally-driven and that provide direct benefits to the community, this bill will support community engagement and availability of local jobs.

What will the grant programs support?

- The Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Program (administered by the Maryland Department of Environment) will fund projects, infrastructure, and education to reduce food waste, rescue edible food, compost or recycle food residuals, and to transition away from single-use food serviceware.
- The On-Farm Organics Diversion and Recycling Grant Program (administered by the Maryland Department of Agriculture) will support farmers in food preservation and rescue, including: cold storage; recovering food to feed animals; organics recycling; compost use; and the equipment, infrastructure, labor, technical assistance, testing, and other needs to achieve food waste reduction and diversion.
- The County Wasted Food Reduction Block Grant Program (administered by the Maryland Department of Environment) distributes flexible, annual funding to County governments, in proportion to their population, for infrastructure, programs, and education to reduce, rescue, and divert wasted food.

Who will be eligible for grants?

- The Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Program will be accessible to: units of local government, local educational agencies, institutions of higher education, non-profit organizations, for-profit businesses, and farmers including urban farmers. This includes waste haulers looking to move their businesses toward waste reduction and diversion activities.
- The On-Farm Organics Diversion and Recycling Grant Program will be accessible to: farmers including urban farmers, Soil Conservation Districts, institutions of higher education, non-profit organizations, and for-profit businesses.
- The County Wasted Food Reduction Block Grant Program directs funding to all Maryland counties, including Baltimore City and the Mid-Shore Counties.
- Priority funding for all programs will support projects that provide direct benefits to their local communities and address community needs, serve overburdened or underserved communities, follow relevant best management practices, produce minimally-contaminated compost, and more.

How will this bill be funded?

- In previous years, versions of this bill included a nominal surcharge on trash disposal that would have generously funded the programs. HB 429/SB 599 does not include that funding source, so funding will need to come from another source and is at the discretion of the legislature and governor. Advocates and sponsors are working to identify further funding options for this bill.
- It is important to pass this bill, regardless of funding source, as a step toward funding the grant programs. Having the detailed grant program structure codified will facilitate more straightforward allocation of funding when future funding sources are identified.
- As written, the Departments of Agriculture and Environment are responsible for identifying funding for their respective grant programs. The grant programs may be funded through additional sources including funding mechanisms established in the future.