



P.O. Box 278
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Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Testimony on: SB 599: “On-Farm Organics and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Programs – Established”

Position: Support

Hearing Date: February 24, 2026

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club urges the Committee to support SB 599. The bill would codify a framework for three grant programs¹ within the Maryland Departments of Agriculture and of the Environment that aim to develop alternatives to food waste and organics disposal by investing in local businesses, rural and urban farms, nonprofits, schools, local governments, and more.

Reducing organic waste and its disposal in landfills and incinerators is a key strategy for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and fighting climate change. However, success depends on having in place the infrastructure for expanded composting and organics recycling. It requires investments in infrastructure by local governments, farmers, businesses, schools, nonprofits, and other local entities. By codifying the framework for these three programs in statute, SB 599 would be an essential first step in a multi-year strategy to establish grant programs and secure the resources for these needed investments, while encouraging reduction and diversion of food waste.

Earlier versions of this bill were introduced in 2024 (SB 56), and 2025 (SB 134) that also provided a source of funding for these grant programs. However, recognizing current budget challenges, SB 599 would codify the detailed grant program structure to facilitate allocation of resources once those funding sources are established or identified. The grant programs codified by SB 599 include detailed eligibility criteria that have been refined in collaboration with a wide array of stakeholders over five years. These criteria would prioritize funding for projects that are locally-driven and that provide direct benefits to local communities, supporting community engagement and availability of local jobs. They would also explicitly prioritize operations producing high-quality compost, avoiding contamination from microplastics and PFAS “forever chemicals,” to build local soil health and grow healthy food.

Organics waste diversion investments are critical to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. By creating and codifying the framework for these three grant programs, SB 599 would be a significant step toward achieving this goal. The Sierra Club respectfully requests a favorable report on SB 599.

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¹ On-Farm Organics Diversion and Recycling Grant Program; Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Program; and County Wasted Food Reduction Block Grant Program.

Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America’s oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.