

Testimony in Support of SB599/HB249
On-Farm Organics and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Programs
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

To the Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Emily Ferrufino. I live in Montgomery County, MD, and I urge a favorable report for HB249/SB599. As a current college student, with a long life to look forward to, I am very interested in seeing change being made to the climate crisis, but also the instability we are creating with food availability, and how easily we will throw away anything that is no longer of use or importance to us.

Food waste has become a large indicator of climate change and shows the crisis that many communities are experiencing. The statistics have shown that Maryland's 48 landfills emitted methane equivalent to over 3.1 million metric tons of CO₂ in 2023, equal to 720,500 gas-powered cars, which is significantly more severe at those numbers than carbon dioxide emissions in the first couple of years of emission. The insecurity of food in many households has increased, as the costs of food waste would be going to support less fortunate families. Implementing three grant programs would help with food waste reductions, the health of locally grown food, and would recycle food waste in a way that is beneficial for the environment and the state of Maryland, instead of continuing to fill up the landfills.

We need to care enough about the well-being of our communities, state, and bodies, especially. If we continue to feed ourselves with food that is being grown with heavily chemicalized fertilizers, not only will we not see a change in food waste reduction, but our health will continue to be affected. However, if we create programs to compost and know exactly what is going into the compost, we will have healthy soil that we can confidently say our food came from, and that will not continue to impact our health physically.

This bill will:

- Create high-quality soil amendments to improve soil and water health
- Reduce toxic emissions affecting overburdened communities
- Create jobs in composting, food rescue, sustainable agriculture, and support local economies

I support Bill HB249/SB599, establishing grant programs for getting funding to help reduce waste food production and diversion for multiple reasons. As a former volunteer in helping the less fortunate by making them meals and providing them with other necessities, implementing this bill would make it easier for the less fortunate to produce their own food, and food scarcity statistics in Maryland could get better. Giving people the opportunity to apply for these grants would help start and solidify change within local communities to reduce their emissions, grow food at the local level, and lessen the amount of waste being created.

Thank you for your consideration, and I look to this committee to give HB249/SB599 a favorable report.

Sincerely,
Emily D. Ferrufino