

**HB 429\_SB 599.pdf**

Uploaded by: Alexandria Cooke

Position: FAV

Testimony in Support of HB429/SB599  
On-Farm Organics and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Programs  
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
19 February 2026

To the Chair and Committee Members:

My name is Alexandria Cooke. I live in Crofton, MD, and go to school at St. Mary's College of MD on the St. Mary's River. I urge a favorable report on HB429/SB599 On-Farm Organics and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Programs, and appreciate your consideration of this bill.

Food waste is easier to recycle than plastic, and it can be done at home by nearly anyone with the right training. It is completely unnecessary for food waste to end up in landfills at its current rate. Landfills cause the communities around them to develop cancer and asthma at rates around 50% more than average, and disproportionately affect low-income communities. This bill would give communities the funding and education they need to learn how to compost and the infrastructure to do so. This would save families money, help address food insecurity, and reduce the health risks for surrounding communities. As someone who struggles with asthma, it has impacted my life in many different areas and made it difficult for me to achieve my goals. I have had to hold back in activities like hiking and running, which I love but am unable to do anymore. I get sick more often and to a worse extent than most, and missing so much school holds me back academically. I don't believe that these communities deserve to have the families who are a part of them suffer in this way, or from any other health condition preventable from decreasing use of these landfills. That is why I support HB429/SB599 and urge you to do the same.

Thank you for your consideration, and I look to this committee to give SB0342/HB0331 a favorable report.

Sincerely,  
Alexandria Cooke

**SB0599-EEE\_MACo\_SUP.pdf**

Uploaded by: Dominic Butchko

Position: FAV



**MARYLAND**  
*Association of*  
**COUNTIES**

## Senate Bill 599

### *On-Farm Organics and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Programs - Established*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Education, Energy, and the Environment  
and Budget & Taxation Committees

Date: February 24, 2026

From: Dominic J. Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 599. This bill would establish several grant programs to expand composting, strengthen environmental stewardship, and improve recycling outcomes.

Tackling climate change will require bold, practical investments across many core public services. Food waste sent to landfills generates significant greenhouse gas emissions—especially methane—and finding better ways to reduce and divert this material is one of the most important long-term challenges facing local governments. SB 599 would help counties turn a costly liability into a valuable resource by investing in new programs that reduce food waste upstream and redirect unavoidable waste into more productive uses.

SB 599 is a forward-looking, innovative approach to an age-old issue. Accordingly, MACo urges the Committee to issue a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 599.

# **Emily Ferrufino-Testimony for HB429\_SB599.pdf**

Uploaded by: Emily Ferrufino

Position: FAV

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 CO<sub>2</sub> 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

**SB599\_CleanWaterAction\_Fav.pdf**

Uploaded by: Emily Ranson

Position: FAV



**SB599: On-Farm Organics and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Programs - Established  
House Environment and Transportation Committee  
February 24, 2026**

Position: Favorable

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

Clean Water Action urges a favorable report on SB599.

Maryland has commendable goals to reduce food waste and increase organic recycling. These efforts have significant co-benefits, improving food security for our residents, reducing greenhouse gas emissions from food rotting in landfills or burning in incinerators, and enables our farmers to diversify their income and reduce climate-polluting synthetic fertilizers. But we know that a major limiting factor for the expansion of infrastructure and programs reducing food waste and recycling organics is cost. Maryland has no dedicated funding streams for reducing and diverting food waste.

Maryland has made great strides reducing methane emissions from landfills, with more stringent methane regulations on landfills. Controlling the amount of methane from a landfill is great, but another effective strategy is to reduce the amount of methane-producing organic waste from entering the landfill in the first place.

SB599 will establish grants that, when funded, will provide opportunities for small businesses, non-profits, and local governments to pursue policies and practices that divert food waste from the waste system through activities like food rescue (getting usable food to people), composting, and preventing the food waste in the beginning. This could be cold storage to improve the capacity of our food banks, share tables and refrigerators at schools so uneaten food can be offered to a hungry child, or equipment on a farm to help a farmer incorporate food scraps into their manure compost piles and create high quality fertilizer.

SB599 reflects HB42 which passed the House in 2025. The substantive change from the bill as introduced is, as amended, it does not include the \$2 surcharge on trash that would have created a dedicated funding stream for the grants. Instead, SB599 establishes the grant framework, so it is available as the budget allows.

Thank you and we urge a favorable report,

Emily Ranson  
Clean Water Action  
[eranson@cleanwater.org](mailto:eranson@cleanwater.org)

Clean Water Action  
145 W Ostend St Suite 600  
Baltimore, MD 21230

**SB 599 - MoCo DEP - (GA 26) FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Garrett Fitzgerald

Position: FAV



# Montgomery County

## Office of Intergovernmental Relations

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**ROCKVILLE: 240-777-6550**

**ANNAPOLIS: 240-777-8270**

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**SB 599**

**DATE: February 24, 2026**

**SPONSOR: Senator Hester**

**ASSIGNED TO: Education, Energy, and the Environment**

**CONTACT PERSON: Garrett Fitzgerald ([garrett.fitzgerald@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:garrett.fitzgerald@montgomerycountymd.gov))**

**POSITION: Support (Department of Environmental Protection)**

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### **On-Farm Organics and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Programs - Established**

This bill would establish three related new grant programs designed to help reduce food waste and improve the recycling of organic material in Maryland.

The On-Farm Organics Diversion and Recycling Grant Program would award grants for the development and implementation of projects involving on-farm organics recycling and compost use, wasted food prevention, and food rescue.

The Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Program would award grants for infrastructure, programs and education that reduce, rescue and divert food waste in Maryland. Local governments would be eligible to receive grants from this program.

The County Wasted Food Reduction Block Grant Program would award grants to counties in proportion to their population for projects to develop, maintain, or expand infrastructure, programs and education that reduce, rescue, and divert food waste in the county.

Each of these grant programs has the potential to benefit residents and local businesses in Maryland while helping to reduce food waste, improve food security, and create positive environmental outcomes. While the bill does not directly allocate funding into any of these grant programs, it represents an important step to establish program priorities and eligibility and sets the stage for future implementation.

We respectfully request that the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 599.

**HB429\_SB 599 Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Hilary Crouse

Position: FAV

**Testimony in Support of SB599/HB429**  
**On-Farm Organics and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Programs**  
**Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**  
**Submitted on 20 February 2026 by 6:00 pm**

To the Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Hilary Crouse. I live in Catonsville, MD and have spent the past 3 years going to college in rural St. Mary's County. I urge you to consider the positive implications of this bill and thank you in advance for your consideration of support.

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. The three R's commonly heard in relation to the environment and human use of nonrenewable resources and materials. Waste reduction will contribute to a reduction in greenhouse gases in many aspects. The transportation of, removal of, and incinerating of waste all contribute to carbon emissions. Waste reduction and diversion in targeted areas can decrease these emissions drastically.

This Bill will:

- Reduce, rescue, compost, and recycle wasted food; along with moving towards reusable food service ware
- Create on farm organic recycling and compost
- Reduce, rescue, and divert wasted food

I support HB049/SB-599 because it will move Maryland towards lesser waste in no reusable food ware, reduce food insecurity, and create better opportunities for organizations to implement composting. I support this bill because it will create an ability for my school, St. Mary's College of Maryland, to apply for funds that could allocate a composting program for our campus and surrounding community to benefit from.

Thank you for your consideration, and I look to this committee to give SB559/HB429 a favorable report.

Sincerely,  
Hilary Crouse

# **HB429\_SB599 Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Isabella Clancy

Position: FAV

To the Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Isabella Clancy, and I live in Columbia, MD, and go to school in St. Mary's, right where the Potomac River and Chesapeake Bay meet. I urge a favorable report on HB429/SB599. I thank you in advance for your consideration and potential support.

I care about your support for this bill because I am a double major in environmental studies and political science, and have applied to law schools for the fall of 2026 - I hope to become an environmental lawyer, and I feel passionate about the climate crisis on a global and especially local scale. I am the treasurer for my college's Kate Farm Club, where we focus on sustainability initiatives, give back to the community by donating thousands of pounds of freshly grown produce, and provide students with hands-on opportunities to connect with our environment. In addition to all this, I am doing my St. Mary's Project on PFAs contamination, so this bill's focus on amending soil, water, and human health aligns directly with my passion and interests. I care a significant amount because, as a 19-year-old, I seek to have a better future for myself and others.

I, and other constituents, are asking that you support HBO429 to create three essential grant programs that will reduce food waste, combat climate change, improve public health, and strengthen Maryland's food security. These programs are crucial as food waste is a climate crisis - Maryland's 48 landfills emitted methane equivalent to over 3.1 million metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> in 2023, equal to 720,500 gas-powered cars. This is especially concerning as methane is 80 times more potent than carbon dioxide in the first 20 years of its release. The consequences of such potent pollution have caused nearly \$100 million in health damages to Baltimore and D.C. residents, with 58% of landfills being located near low-income communities (falling in the 90th percentile statewide).

Moreover, the benefits of such programs range from environmental to economic aspects. To pass this bill would set an example for other legislative bodies in the future, so please consider supporting such an all-encompassing, environmentally beneficial bill. It would obviously dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions, support Maryland's climate goals, and reduce toxic emissions affecting overburdened communities. It will also help families save up to 2,913 dollars per year on wasted food and help support local economies through community-oriented projects. So, please consider supporting this bill and all of its importance.

# Senate Bill 599 - MASCD - Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Jen Nelson

Position: FAV



February 24, 2026

The Honorable Brian Feldman, Chair  
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

**Re: Senate Bill 599 – On-Farm Organics and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Programs - Established**

Position: **Support**

Chair Feldman & Committee Members:

On behalf of the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts (MASCD) I am writing to express our support for **Senate Bill 599 – On-Farm Organics and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Programs - Established**. MASCD, incorporated in 1956, promotes practical and effective soil, water, and natural resource related programs to all Marylanders. Through individual conservation districts MASCD provides leadership, education, cooperation, and local direction, on a voluntary basis.

SB 599 would create an on-farm grant program to support organics recycling and compost use, wasted food prevention, and food rescue, with clear eligibility and priorities. Eligible projects include on-farm and community composting, infrastructure and collection programs, technical assistance, best-management-practice training, and studies of how compost applications affect on-farm nutrient and water-quality management. From MASCD's perspective, these activities are directly tied to reducing nutrient losses, improving soil structure and infiltration, and helping producers meet Maryland's water-quality and climate goals while staying in business.

SB 599 continues the tradition of environmental stewardship and economic relief for our Maryland farms and families. For these reasons we respectfully request a **favorable** committee report. Thank you for your kind consideration and attention to this legislation.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jen Nelson, Executive Director  
Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts

# **Testimony in support of HB 429.pdf**

Uploaded by: Joanna Cleaver

Position: FAV

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

Hearing Date: February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2026

To the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

My name is Joanna Cleaver, I am a constituent from Frederick County, MD, and I am writing to you in support of HB 429/SB 599. I urge a favorable report on this bill.

I have a personal connection to the contents of this bill, after interning on a small farm and seeing firsthand the benefits of easy access to compost. We were lucky enough to have an existing composting program, utilizing both community food waste and partnering with other organizations to divert their waste (including wood chips). This availability of nutrient rich soil in plentiful supply was extremely beneficial to the operations of the farm. Because of the composting program, we could care for our produce without using synthetic fertilizers. This allowed us to provide hundreds of pounds of fresh food to the community and a local food bank. I hope that in the future, more farms will be able to utilize compost infrastructure.

Soil everywhere needs to be healthy and properly enriched to grow food and support our populations, and compost use is an easy way to facilitate this fertilization. By establishing grants that will assist farmers in creating on-farm compost infrastructure, as well as supporting technical assistance and training, this bill will support sustainable food systems. We cannot rely on synthetic fertilizers and other practices which are contaminating our waterways and depleting soil health, instead we must educate growers on sustainable practices that truly nourish the land and our bodies.

By increasing on-farm compost use, as well as supporting food preservation and animal food recovery, food waste will be reduced and/or diverted into a more renewable channel. This will reduce carbon emissions, save money for farmers and families, and reduce food insecurity – and this is only the tip of the iceberg. HB 429/SB 599 has my support, and I hope that it has yours as well.

Thanks for your consideration.

Best,

Joanna Cleaver

# **SB0599 - Compost Grants - Climate Parents of Princ**

Uploaded by: Joseph Jakuta

Position: FAV

**Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment**

**Testimony on: SB 599 - "On-Farm Organics and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Programs"**

**Organization: Climate Parents of Prince George's**

**Person Submitting: Joseph Jakuta, Lead Volunteer**

**Position: Favorable**

**Hearing Date: February 24, 2026**



Dear Mr. Chairperson and Committee Members:

Thank you for considering our testimony to SB 599, "On-Farm Organics and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Programs", which would establish two grant programs to reduce food waste, of which local education agencies would be one of the organizations eligible to receive the grants. Climate Parents is a campaign to reduce climate change-causing pollution in our schools, and our group is active in Prince George's County. In particular, we recently worked directly with Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) technical staff and other advocates to develop a first in the national School Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP).

In the CCAP action M2 specifically recommends use of expanded composting, Offer versus Serve, Food Share table programs in order to Reduce Food Waste and Increase Composting.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, Maryland has nearly 900,000 students enrolled in school and this means that our schools produce a large number of meals to feed these students on any given day and even in a perfect situation there will be high amounts of food waste.<sup>2</sup> In Prince George's County, at least 64% of its students participate in the Free and Reduced Lunch Meal (FARM) program, and given some strict federal requirements around fruits and vegetables being served to all students in the FARM program the amount of uneaten food can increase.<sup>3</sup>

Providing the funding to get wide-scale composting programs at schools in Maryland is also affecting the ability of LEAs to comply with state law. It is clear that a good number of the schools need to comply with Environmental Article Section 9-1724.1, as enacted in 2021, in particular in Prince George's County given both the amount of food waste produced serving students and the existence of the Prince George's County Organics Composting Facility that all of PGCPS schools are within thirty miles of.

While adoption of composting in Prince George's County started strong with nearly 10% of schools joining in the first program in the 2022-2023 school year, and the number of schools joining more than doubling in the second year of the program, the following two school years only saw an increase in of 8 schools, leaving 80% of schools without composting as of the 2025-2026 school year.<sup>4</sup> Funds are needed to achieve the requirements of state law and the goals of the PGCPS CCAP.

Compliance with this law is challenging with schools facing budget constraints that establishing the Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Program will open up more funds to implement composting and other food diversion programs.

We encourage a **FAVORABLE** report for this important legislation.

<sup>1</sup> <https://pgcps.org/globalassets/featured-pages/about-pgcps/docs---about-pgcps/climate-change/pgcps-climate-change-action-plan--april-28-2022.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [https://planning.maryland.gov/MSDC/Documents/school\\_enrollment/school\\_2021/Table1.pdf](https://planning.maryland.gov/MSDC/Documents/school_enrollment/school_2021/Table1.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.pgcps.org/globalassets/offices/accountability/docs---accountability/sprm/2021-2026-equity-strategic-plan.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1jjoTFx6W6Di1ZDyH69Elx3eMFKlxDfPeW-yCPSQBle0/edit?gid=1794882131#gid=1794882131>

**SB599 Testimony.pdf**  
Uploaded by: Kareena Gupta  
Position: FAV

Every afternoon in Maryland school cafeterias, unopened milk cartons, fruit, and sealed sandwiches are swept into trash cans just minutes before lunch ends. Perfectly edible food and food scraps are treated as garbage and hauled away to be burned in incinerators or buried in landfills, where it fuels climate pollution and harms nearby communities. As Maryland students, we have seen this persist over and over again.

Maryland legislators should fund and expand composting and food waste diversion grants this legislative session. While Maryland has taken important steps in recent years, too much food waste is being burned or buried, exposing our local communities to harmful pollution and wasting resources that could instead be used to nourish people and enrich our soils. Investing in composting and food recovery would reduce methane emissions, lower disposal costs, and create healthier learning environments for students across Maryland.

When food waste is buried in landfills or burned in incinerators, it produces methane, a greenhouse gas more than 80 times as potent as carbon dioxide in the first 20 years after it is released. In Maryland alone, landfill methane emissions in 2023 had the same climate impact as more than [700,000 gas-powered cars](#). These emissions worsen extreme heat, flooding, and severe storms that Maryland communities are already experiencing. At the same time, landfills and incinerators release pollutants linked to asthma, respiratory disease, organ damage, and cancer. Due to decades of environmental injustice, marginalized communities are far more likely to live near these facilities, carrying a disproportionate share of the health burden. Continuing to send food waste to landfills and incinerators puts Maryland families at risk of preventable health issues.

Maryland schools are a major and often overlooked source of food waste, but they are also an opportunity for change. Across the country, school cafeterias generate an estimated [1 billion pounds of food waste](#) annually, much of which remains unopened or uneaten. With food recovery programs, this unopened, uneaten food can be redistributed to the broader community, helping improve food security. With composting, food scraps can decompose without releasing large portions of greenhouse gases, turning into fresh, nutrient-rich soil instead. The cost barrier is surprisingly low. A school can operate both composting and food recovery programs for roughly \$2,500 per year, covering bins, hauling, and basic supplies.

To address this issue Maryland legislators should fully fund and expand statewide food waste diversion grants this session. One clear opportunity is [House Bill 429](#)/Senate Bill 599, which would establish statewide grant programs to support food waste reduction, composting infrastructure, and county-level diversion efforts. These grants would provide the resources needed to keep food out of landfills and incinerators. But like past initiatives, its impact will depend on whether it is fully funded and carried through. Previous bills, such as the SB124 school composting grants, demonstrated overwhelming demand and support from schools across the state, yet were unable to move forward. House Bill 429 will help schools afford compost bins, hauling services, and food recovery equipment, while also helping counties build the composting capacity they need. Maryland students are ready to lead on climate action and food waste reduction. What we need now is for state leaders to meet us with the funding and commitment to make these solutions possible before another school lunch ends up in the trash.

# **Hester SB599 Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Katie Fry Hester

Position: FAV

**KATIE FRY HESTER**  
*Legislative District 9*  
Howard and Montgomery Counties

Education, Energy, and  
Environment Committee

Chair, Joint Committee on  
Cybersecurity, Information Technology  
and Biotechnology



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**THE SENATE OF MARYLAND**  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony in Support of SB599 – On-Farm Organics and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Programs – Established**

February 20, 2026

Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 599, which would establish three coordinated grant programs to build Maryland’s food waste reduction and organics diversion infrastructure.

Maryland is discarding enormous amounts of usable food and organic material each year, wasting resources, increasing greenhouse gas emissions, and placing avoidable strain on our landfills. In 2019, 66 million tons of wasted food were generated nationwide in the retail, food service, and residential sectors, and approximately 60% of that waste was sent to landfills. When food ends up in landfills, it decomposes and produces methane, a potent greenhouse gas that accelerates climate change.

In 2024, food represented about 19% of all Maryland waste at about 850,000 tons.<sup>1</sup> Each household loses around 216 meals annually.<sup>2</sup> Much of this food could have been used or composted rather than ending up in our waste stream.

The problem is not simply waste, it is a lack of infrastructure and investment. Many farms, businesses, counties, and nonprofit food rescue organizations lack the funding and logistical capacity to prevent, rescue, compost, or recycle wasted food. Strategic investment in food waste reduction would lower greenhouse gas emissions, conserve water, support farmers, and redirect edible food to Marylanders in need.

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1

<https://news.maryland.gov/mde/2025/04/07/maryland-department-of-the-environment-urges-consumers-to-make-sustainable-choices-for-food-waste-prevention-week/#:~:text=Wasted%20food%20is%20not%20just,average%20household%20approximately%20%242%2C880%20annually.>

<sup>2</sup> <https://deepcreektimes.com/maryland-households-lose-15th-most-in-food-waste-each-year/>

SB599 addresses this gap. The bill establishes three coordinated grant programs to build Maryland's food waste reduction and organics diversion infrastructure:

**1. Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Program**

Administered by the Maryland Department of Agriculture, this program supports projects, infrastructure, and education that reduce food waste, rescue edible food, compost or recycle food residuals, and help transition away from single-use food service ware.

**2. On-Farm Organics Diversion and Recycling Grant Program**

Administered by the Maryland Department of the Environment, this program supports on-farm food waste reduction and organics diversion efforts, including cold storage, food rescue partnerships, composting, compost application, and related infrastructure that helps farmers utilize organic materials productively.

**3. County Wasted Food Reduction Block Grant Program**

Administered by the Department of the Environment, in consultation with the department of Agriculture, this program provides block grant funding to all counties in proportion to population to reduce, rescue, and divert wasted food. Eligible recipients include local governments, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, for-profit businesses, and farmers. Priority is given to projects that benefit local communities, serve overburdened or underserved communities, and follow best management practices.

Together, these programs fill longstanding gaps in Maryland's approach to organic waste management by creating a structured pathway for prevention, rescue, composting, and recycling.

Importantly, this year's version of SB599 does not have the tipping fee included in previous drafts. The bill does not prescribe a dedicated funding source. Instead, it directs the Maryland Department of the Environment and the Maryland Department of Agriculture to work collaboratively to seek and apply for available funding to support these grant programs.

SB599 represents a practical, forward-looking strategy that advances environmental stewardship, supports farmers, strengthens food systems, and reduces strain on our waste infrastructure, without imposing new fees. By promoting collaboration and positioning Maryland to compete for available funding, this bill will help reduce waste, lower emissions, and prevent billions of dollars in avoidable losses. For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on SB599.

Sincerely,

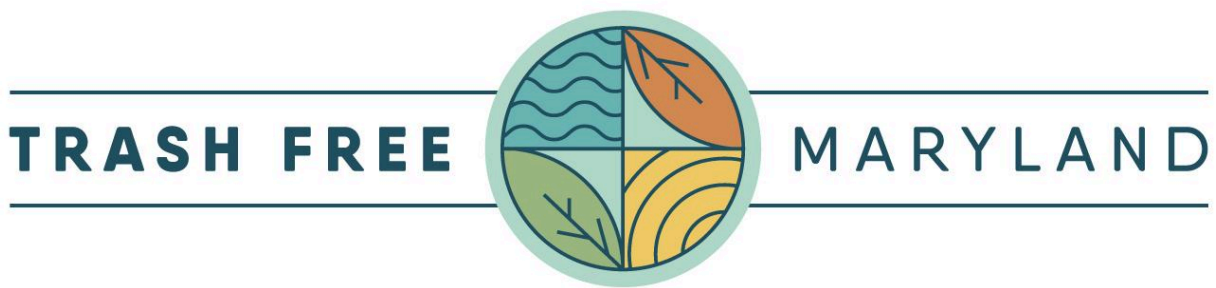


Senator Katie Fry Hester  
Howard and Montgomery Counties

**SB599\_TrashFreeMD\_FAV\_022426.pdf**

Uploaded by: Kelly Doordan

Position: FAV



**Bill: SB599** On-Farm Organics and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Programs - Established  
**Committee:** Education, Energy, and the Environment  
**Hearing Date:** February 24, 2026  
**Position: Support**

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee:

Trash Free Maryland strongly supports SB599, which will:

- establish the On-Farm Organics Diversion and Recycling Grant Program in the Department of Agriculture to award grants to eligible entities to develop and implement on-farm organics recycling, compost use, wasted food prevention, and food rescue; and to
- establish the Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Program and the County Wasted Food Reduction Block Grant Program in the Department of the Environment to fund certain projects that reduce, rescue, and divert wasted food. Eligible grant projects include infrastructure development, collection, education, and technical assistance to support the transition from single-use food serviceware to durable and reusable food serviceware.

Trash Free Maryland works toward a state that is free of trash and litter, and where land and waterways are safe and healthy for all to enjoy. We see grant programs to divert valuable materials from disposal and to facilitate transitions from single-use to durable food service items as part of a critical bridge of seed funding investments toward microplastic reductions and a trash-free future.

Trash Free Maryland urges you to support this legislation for the following reasons:

- Single-use, disposable food serviceware contributes to unnecessary waste and plastic pollution found in our litter cleanups and as a contaminant in recycling. A transition to durable and reusable food service ware can reduce plastic waste, microplastic production, and pollution in litter and recycling/composting processes.
- The shift from single-use to reusable food serviceware alternatives can require an initial investment in durable replacement products or dishwashers. Providing one-time funding to support this transition can enable a lasting switch.
- Providing technical support and a state grant program will help leverage scarce dollars to share lessons learned and best practices and to take advantage of economies of scale where possible.
- Microplastics are an increasing concern for both environmental and public health. Providing grants to support a transition to reusable food service ware and to organics recycling projects that produce minimally-contaminated soil amendments would be a step toward reducing plastic pollution.
- Reducing and diverting wasted food supports Maryland's climate and waste reduction goals.

For these reasons, we respectfully request a favorable report on SB599.

Contact: Kelly Doordan, Executive Director, Trash Free Maryland, [kelly@trashfreemaryland.org](mailto:kelly@trashfreemaryland.org)

# **Lauren Fanning Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Lauren Fanning

Position: FAV

**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

# 2026\_SB599\_Organics\_Denali.pdf

Uploaded by: Lindsay Thompson

Position: FAV



February 24, 2026

Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

Senate Bill 599 - On-Farm Organics and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Programs

Position: Support

On behalf of Denali.Water.Solutions, I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of SB 599, which establishes the On\_Farm.Organics.Diversion.and.Recycling.Grant.Program, the Wasted.Food.Reduction.and.Diversion.Grant.Program. This legislation will significantly strengthen Maryland's commitment to sustainable waste management, nutrient cycling, and water quality protection.

Denali Water Solutions is focused on innovative environmental solutions that improve resource recovery and enhance nutrient and water management. We work with agricultural producers, municipalities, and private companies to implement environmentally-sound practices that reduce waste, improve soil and water quality, and support sustainable local economies.

By funding on-farm organics diversion and composting, SB 599 helps keep organic material out of waste streams and repurpose it back into nutrient-rich soil amendments. This reduces pressure landfills, septic systems and wastewater infrastructure. The bill supports infrastructure development and technical assistance for composting food residuals and organic materials on farms and in communities. This creates practical solutions for handling organic waste at the source instead of relying solely on centralized waste collection or landfill disposal. All helping to strengthen local resilience while improving soils and reducing transportation-related emissions.

The bill's prioritization of job training, labor opportunities, and inclusive hiring practices ensures that environmental sustainability is paired with economic opportunity. In doing so, SB 599 supports communities across Maryland, urban and rural alike, in benefiting from a growing circular economy centered around resource recovery.

This bill advances practical, science-based solutions that align environmental protection with economic opportunity and community resilience. It is a critical step toward healthier soils, cleaner waters, and a more sustainable Maryland.

For these reasons, Denali.Water.Solutions strongly supports SB 599 and encourages the committee to issue a favorable report.

**HB 429\_SB 599.pdf**

Uploaded by: Lucas Evans

Position: FAV

To the Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Lucas Evans and I go to St. Mary's College of Maryland, I urge a favorable report on HB 429/SB 599.

HB 429 / SB 599 creates three statewide grant programs in Maryland to reduce food waste. It would fund projects that prevent and rescue wasted food, expand composting and organic recycling (including on farms), and give counties resources to divert food waste from landfills.

The bill aims to strengthen local infrastructure, support farmers and businesses, improve soil health and food security, and reduce disposal costs over time. While a permanent funding source has not yet been finalized, the bill establishes the framework so the programs can be funded and implemented in the future.

Overall, the bill is part of a long-term plan to secure funding and officially establish these grant programs, with clear rules developed over five years with input from many stakeholders.

I support bill HB 429/SB 599 requiring a decrease in food waste which will help Maryland, economically, environmentally, and in regard to food security. As someone who personally composts at home, but while at college I find it difficult to compost as much, I think that proper food waste is extremely important. Also, I grew up on a small hobby farm, and using all the compost and manure in our gardens was a great example that taught me their power to grow plants very fast. Therefore, combating this issue will help thousands of people while also decreasing carbon emissions.

Thank you for your consideration, and I look to this committee to give HB 429/SB 599 a favorable report.

Sincerely,  
Lucas Evans

**SB 599\_MD Sierra Club\_fav 2-24-26.pdf**

Uploaded by: Martha Ainsworth

Position: FAV



P.O. Box 278  
Riverdale, MD 20738

**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 programs<sup>1</sup> 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.

Ben Fischler  
Chapter Zero Waste Team  
[brf57@yahoo.com](mailto:brf57@yahoo.com)

Josh Tulkin  
Chapter Director  
[Josh.Tulkin@MDSierra.org](mailto:Josh.Tulkin@MDSierra.org)

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

# **SB 599 - On-Farm Organics and Wasted Food Reductio**

Uploaded by: Matthew Capodanno

Position: FAV

## **SB 599**

### **On-Farm Organics and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Programs – Established Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee February 24, 2026**

#### **SUPPORT**

Senate Bill 599 aims to reduce food waste by creating new grant programs that would fund infrastructure, projects, education, food rescue, and other food waste reduction programs to donate usable food and compost what remains.

The Maryland Food Bank estimates that 1 in 3 Marylanders are at risk of food insecurity. A person who is food insecure does not have consistent access to healthy and nutritious food on any given day, and this problem persists in every area of the state.

The Maryland Food Bank understands the importance – and challenges – of reducing and minimizing wasted food. We are an integral part of the local food system as the statewide food assistance safety net organization, last year providing food to over 1 million unique Marylanders. To carry out this critical work, we rely in part on donations of food. These donations come from a variety of sources, including partnerships we organize with local grocery, wholesale, and retail organizations, as well as farms located around the state. Specifically, the Food Bank facilitates a Retail Recovery program that connects grocery stores and wholesalers to local food pantries and partners with farms who donate produce and allow staff and volunteers to glean extra crops. We believe these are critical efforts to re-distribute food before it becomes wasted.

This work requires adequate resources and the partnership of the entire food system working together. SB 599 helps make that more realistic and achievable by providing resources to non-profit organizations and small businesses, local governments and communities, and our friends in agriculture. By involving the entire food supply chain, Maryland has the opportunity to not only combat wasted food productively and responsibly, but also to strengthen necessary infrastructure, increase education and awareness, and achieve environmental goals.

The Maryland Food Bank appreciates your consideration and respectfully requests a favorable report on SB 599.

# **Maryland Catholic Conference\_FAVSB599\_.pdf**

Uploaded by: Michelle Zelaya

Position: FAV



MARYLAND  
CATHOLIC  
CONFERENCE

February 24<sup>th</sup> 2026

SB599

**On-Farm Organics and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Programs -  
Established  
Environment and Transportation Committee  
Position: Favorable**

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of **Senate Bill 599**. The Maryland Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

**Senate Bill 599** establishes a comprehensive statewide effort to reduce food waste and expand organic recycling through three grant programs. The On-Farm Organics Diversion and Recycling Grant Program within the Department of Agriculture will support farmers and agricultural partners in developing on-farm composting, organics recycling, soil-building practices, and food-rescue initiatives. Additionally, the bill creates the Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Program and the County Wasted Food Reduction Block Grant Program within the Department of the Environment to fund community and county-level projects that reduce, rescue, and divert wasted food before it reaches landfills.

**Senate Bill 599** takes a proactive, solutions-oriented approach to one of Maryland's most persistent environmental and economic challenges: the overwhelming amount of organic waste and edible food that ends up in our landfills. Food waste is not just an environmental issue; it is a moral and economic one. When salvageable food is discarded, families lose access to nutrition, farmers lose revenue, and communities carry the burden of increased disposal costs and rising methane emissions. This legislation provides the necessary tools to reverse that trend through prevention, rescue, and responsible recycling.

From a Catholic perspective, **Senate Bill 599** also reflects our shared moral responsibility to care for creation and to uphold the dignity of every person. Catholic social teaching reminds us that the goods of the earth are meant for all and that waste—especially of food—undermines both stewardship and solidarity. By reducing unnecessary disposal and strengthening systems that rescue edible food for those in need, this legislation embodies the principles of the common good and preferential option for the poor. It calls us to be faithful stewards of God's creation, ensuring that the blessings of our land are used wisely, sustainably, and in service to our neighbors.

Supporting these grant programs is a meaningful step toward building a cleaner, healthier, and more sustainable Maryland. It invests directly in our agricultural communities, improves local soil and water quality, strengthens food security, and advances our statewide climate goals. Most importantly, it encourages collaboration, creativity, and long-term solutions—values Marylander’s share.

I respectfully urge a favorable report on this proactive and practical legislation that supports our farmers, protects our environment, and ensures that less food goes to waste and more goes to Maryland families.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference urges a favorable report on **Senate Bill 599**.

# **CE Ball 2026 - SB0599 - On Farm Organics and Waste**

Uploaded by: Monica Perez

Position: FAV



## HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

3430 Courthouse Drive ■ Ellicott City, Maryland 21043 ■ 410-313-2013 Voice/Relay

Calvin Ball  
Howard County Executive  
cball@howardcountymd.gov

www.howardcountymd.gov  
FAX 410-313-3051

February 11, 2026

The Honorable Senator Feldman, Chair  
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
2 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT** of **Senate Bill 0599**: On-Farm Organics and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Programs - Established

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee:

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, organic waste—such as food scraps—accounts for approximately 30 percent of the local solid waste stream. When food waste is sent to landfills, it becomes a major source of methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), a greenhouse gas with more than 25 times the global warming potential of carbon dioxide. Composting food waste significantly reduces methane emissions while creating valuable, soil-enriching products.

Howard County has already demonstrated leadership in this area through its Feed the Green Bin program, which enables residents to divert food waste from landfills to compost. The program currently provides weekly food waste collection to more than 58,000 households, substantially reducing landfill waste and greenhouse gas emissions.

At the same time, Howard County farmers have long been leaders in organic recycling. For generations, farmers have composted animal waste to improve soil health and farm productivity. With assistance from the Howard Soil Conservation District, farmers responsibly recycle organic waste and apply it to their fields in accordance with state nutrient management plans. These practices protect the environment, improve soil health, increase crop yields, and ultimately enhance farm profitability.

This legislation, which establishes the On-Farm Organics Diversion and Recycling Grant Program, will provide critical funding to expand and strengthen these efforts. The grant program will support on-farm organic recycling and compost utilization, wasted food prevention initiatives, and food rescue programs. These investments will reduce and divert food waste, protect our environment, and provide valuable soil amendments for agricultural use.

In short, this legislation represents a win for our community, our environment, and our farmers. For these reasons, I respectfully urge a **favorable report on SB 0599**.

Respectfully,

Calvin Ball  
Howard County Executive

# **On-Farms Organics and Wasted Food Reduction and Di**

Uploaded by: Nicholas Suwito

Position: FAV

On-Farms Organics and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Programs.

**HB429/SB599**

To the Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Nicholas (Nick) Suwito, I am from Clarksburg, Maryland and I urge you to take action for HB429/SB599.

Food waste reduction has been a major challenge so far and it is causing a worsening climate crisis and negative health impacts to the environment. Waste products such as single-use glass, plastic and metal are often buried in landfills, which could be a danger to the environment. They often lead to disproportionate health impacts, causing millions of dollars in health charges to Baltimore and D.C residents and around half of various communities are suffering from cancer or asthma. About 1 in 6 children are suffering with food insecurity

We should address the situations by covering funds, infrastructure for food waste reduction initiatives, food rescue and redistribution programs, composting infrastructure and collection programs and transition from single-use to reusable food serviceware. To do that, we will have to cover \$100 million in health charges and fund for initiative tasks. This should ensure food security and improved healthcare funds for a more sustainable community. I urge you to agree on this bill so that we can address the issues effectively and efficiently. HB429/SB599.

Sincerely, Nicholas M. Suwito

**MRN re SB599 On-Farm Organics and Wasted Food Redu**

Uploaded by: Peter Houstle

Position: FAV



**February 24, 2026**

**To: Maryland House Environment & Transportation Committee  
Re: SB599 On-Farm Organics and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Programs  
Support**

Maryland Recycling Network members are public and private sectors recyclers and recycling advocates. Our members are county and municipal government sustainability and recycling managers, private sector recyclers, non-profit recyclers and citizens who support recycling. We have direct experience operating recycling and composting programs at the county and municipal government level. We know the ins and outs of recycling in Maryland. Our experience informs our comments.

We promote sustainable reduction, reuse and recycling (the 3 "R's") of materials otherwise destined for disposal and the purchase of products made with recycled material content. We achieve these goals through educational programs, advocacy, technical assistance, and the development of markets to purchase recycled materials and manufacture products with recycled content.

We support SB599

The MRN supported legislation creating a composting work group to advise the state on how to improve management of Maryland's organic wastes. We also supported follow-up legislation establishing a task force to aid in writing regulations based on those recommendations. We were active members of both state task forces carrying out that legislation. Maryland now enjoys regulations in place to manage organic wastes.

Food waste is the biggest part of Maryland's waste disposal stream. Marylanders sent 849,756 tons of food waste to disposal in 2024. That's 18.8 percent of the solid waste generated in Maryland that year! (See Table 2-1, page 2-5 of Appendix A of Maryland's 2024 Waste Characterization study). We should be composting or using other methods such as edible food recovery instead! We realize that food waste is uniquely challenging to collect and compost. SB599 tackles this problem through grants designed to increase organics recycling and compost use, waste food prevention and food rescue. This is a win for Maryland's environment!

We thank Senator Hester for introducing this bill and urge its speedy passage.

The Maryland Recycling Network is a resource for legislators and others interested in recycling and waste reduction. Contact us at [phoustle@marylandrecyclingnetwork.org](mailto:phoustle@marylandrecyclingnetwork.org), or 301-725-2508, or MRN, PO Box 1640, Columbia MD 21044, if you have any questions or would like additional information regarding our comments.

Sincerely

Chaz Miller  
Chair, MRN Legislative Committee  
Maryland Recycling Network

# **Favorable Testimony of SB599 Enhanced Impact LLC.p**

Uploaded by: Rosa Hance

Position: FAV

# ENHANCED IMPACT LLC

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*Based in Great Mills, Maryland; serving clients leaving only footprints across the Chesapeake Bay Watershed*

## **Favorable Testimony for SB599**

### **On-Farm Organics and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Programs**

#### **Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**

**Hearing Date: February 24, 2026**

Esteemed Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee,

I am writing to you today in strong support of **SB599 On-Farm Organics and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Program Establishment**. In 2025 I founded Enhanced Impact LLC to support mission driven non-profit organizations and sustainable businesses. I am also an adjunct instructor for a LEAD211 Exploring Environmental Advocacy at St Mary's College. I have seen firsthand non-profits, small businesses, friends, and neighbors who are interested in implementing local compost systems that can support communal use struggle for start-up funding.

The broad positive implications of composting and food diversion are evident. Food waste in the United States has huge costs on our wallets, infrastructure, and economy, but there are certain practical limitations for creating system wide solutions. When people consume food in public places, whether at work, school, or play, businesses, restaurants, or when smaller homes, apartments, or condos don't have the physical space or infrastructure to manage compost facilities themselves, they need a safe, convenient, collective way to turn organic waste to nutrient-dense compost.

LeafGrow, compost created from collected food waste from Prince George's and Montgomery County, is a particularly valuable and high quality product. Every person in each locality in the state should have the ability and accessibility to compost. The results are economically beneficial as well in reducing costs for solid waste hauling and keeping local economies vibrant from turning "garbage" to nutritious, healthy soil.

Each one of the proposed grant programs in the bill contributes to a valuable sector of the waste stream and has clear benefits supporting:

- (1) Farmers and their on farm operations, inclusive of urban agriculture
- (2) Nonprofits and their programming around waste diversion and education
- (3) Counties
- (4) Soil Conservation Districts
- (5) Higher Education Institutions, which have wide community benefits and implications beyond the direct beneficiaries of the students, faculty, and staff

On a personal level, I compost at home, using a small scale backyard bin, but recognize that larger institutions, such as local colleges, and commercial businesses including restaurants need larger, system wide support for implementing compost and food waste diversion programs. Compost is a great soil base to plant in, whether for tree plantings, vegetables or flowers. I've used the Maryland Environmental Service product LeafGrow for community tree plantings, free food gardens when volunteering with the Southern Maryland Sierra Club and for my home vegetable garden. **To transform personal strides to community wide strides, we need strong support from our elected representatives for food diversion and compost initiatives.**

Maryland has taken meaningful steps already to encourage a more sustainable society, address food diversion, and create a more circular local economy. Composting was mentioned in the Maryland Climate Plan, but the funding and specificity around implementation has been lacking. This committee has passed food waste diversion legislation before, but the grant legislations have been introduced and stagnated for years. The need for addressing waste is only growing with each passing year.

I want to close with a note of sincere gratitude to the sponsors who have worked hard with stakeholders to bring a thoughtful approach to crafting these programs. I appreciate all of the considerations the committee makes on a wide variety of issues and encourage a favorable vote on SB599 this year to take the next step to delivering solutions to Maryland businesses, nonprofits, and communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

*Rosa E. P. Hance*

Rosa E. P. Hance

Founder

[Enhanced Impact LLC](#)

**SB599\_MRA\_FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Sarah Price

Position: FAV

# MARYLAND RETAILERS ALLIANCE

*The Voice of Retailing in Maryland*



**SB599 On-Farm Organics and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant  
Programs - Established  
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2026**

**Position: Favorable**

**Background:** SB599 would establish a grant program to fund projects that aim to reduce food waste in Maryland.

**Comments:** The Maryland Retailers Alliance supports SB599, which would establish a grant program to incentivize and support actions to reduce food waste in Maryland. Efforts to reduce food waste often lead to symbiotic relationships between food retailers and entities like food banks and local farms. Many of our grocery and other food retail members have engaged in contracts and relationships for many years with farms and charitable organizations to divert unsold food products, even before recent State laws drew more attention to the issue. The establishment of a grant award to further incentivize food waste diversion will benefit a variety of industries in Maryland and assist in efforts to find new uses for unsold products within the food retail industry.

We would respectfully urge a favorable vote on SB599. Thank you for your consideration.

**Bill HB 429\_SB 599.pdf**

Uploaded by: Sarah Swimmer

Position: FAV

## **On-Farm Organics and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Programs**

### **HB 429/SB 599**

To the Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Sarah Swimmer. I live in Baltimore, Maryland, and I urge a **favorable** report on HB 429/SB 599. Thank you in advance for your consideration of support.

Food is often discarded into already overcrowded landfills, costing the average household \$2,913 annually. Both landfills and incinerators affect low-income families the most because they are located across the country, with 58% of them near these communities. Those who reside in neighborhoods near a landfill or incinerator are more susceptible to cancer or asthma. On top of being incredibly harmful to people, landfills are incredibly harmful to the environment, as the 48 landfills located across Maryland emit the same amount of methane as 720,500 gas-powered cars, as of 2023. As someone who resides in downtown Baltimore, relatively close to the incinerators, I have seen firsthand the large amount of smoke and smog these facilities emit and can only imagine how detrimental it is to one's health.

This bill builds on Maryland's 2021 food waste law and 2023 landfill methane standards. It has been refined over four years with stakeholder input from MDE, MDA, Maryland Environmental Health Network, and others.

This bill will:

- Support local farmers
- Fund infrastructure, programs, and education

- Provides flexible, annual funding to counties

I support bill HB 429/SB 599 for multiple reasons. This bill would provide support for Maryland residents, businesses, and schools to save resources and further understand how to prevent food waste. As a public school student, I understand how important saving money and resources is, and this bill would directly benefit others in a similar position.

Thank you for your consideration, and I look to this committee to give HB 429/SB 599 a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Sarah Swimmer

# **HB429\_SB599 FAQs - Wasted Food Reduction and Diver**

Uploaded by: Sophia Jones

Position: FAV

# 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.

# **SB 599 Sign-On Testimony - FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Sophia Jones

Position: FAV

**TESTIMONY TO THE MARYLAND SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION,  
ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Senate Bill 599 – On-Farm Organics and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant  
Programs - Established**

**Position: FAVORABLE**

**February 24th, 2026 Public Hearing**

Institute for Local Self-Reliance  
1120 Connecticut Ave, NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20036

Dear Members of the Committee,

The Institute for Local Self-Reliance and the undersigned 24 organizations support SB 599 and encourage the committee to pass this bill. We thank Senator Hester for bringing this legislation forward to establish needed grant programs to reduce, rescue, and divert wasted food from disposal in Maryland.

Maryland's stagnant recycling rate, high landfill emissions, shrinking landfill capacity, and increasing demand for alternatives to food waste disposal indicate the need for widespread investment into wasted food reduction and diversion in a way that benefits local communities, NOW. This bill establishes three grant programs to develop alternatives to food waste and organics disposal, investing in local businesses, rural and urban farms, nonprofits, schools, local governments, and more. Maryland has policies supporting healthy soils, food waste recovery, organics recycling, and composting, but direct support for program infrastructure and implementation remains a crucial obstacle to progress.

It is important to pass this bill now, regardless of presently-available funding sources, as a step toward fully funding the grant programs. SB 599 will codify the grant programs, which include detailed eligibility and priority factors that have been refined in collaboration with a wide array of stakeholders over 5 years. This bill prioritizes funding for projects that are locally-driven and that provide direct benefits to the community, supporting community engagement and availability of local jobs. It also outlines explicit priority for operations producing high-quality compost, avoiding contamination from microplastics and PFAS, to build local soil health and to grow healthy food. Codifying the detailed grant program structure now will facilitate more straightforward allocation of funding once those sources are established or identified.

For these reasons, we, the undersigned 24 organizations, urge the Committee to pass SB 599.

Sincerely,



Sophia Jones  
Associate Director for Policy and Advocacy, Composting for Community  
[Institute for Local Self-Reliance](#)

Attachment: FAQs on SB 599

**Signed-On Organizations:**

[Audubon Mid-Atlantic](#)

**Beaverdam Creek Watershed Watch Group**

[Centro De Apoyo Familiar](#)

[Chesapeake Bay Foundation](#)

[Compostology](#)

[Compost Crew](#)

[ECO City Farms](#)

[Eco MoCo](#)

[Full Circle Future](#)

**GreenWorX LLC**

[Indivisible Howard County](#)

[Less Plastic Please](#)

[Lunch out of Landfills](#)

[Maryland Legislative Coalition - Climate Justice Wing](#)

[Maryland Pesticide Education Network](#)

[Mill Industries](#)

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[Montgomery County Food Council](#)

[National Aquarium](#)

[Natural Resources Defense Council \(NRDC\)](#)

[Safe Skies Maryland](#)

**Sustainable Hyattsville**

[Talbot Green Hands - Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake](#)  
[Trash Free Maryland](#)

# **Written Testimony in Favor of SB599 – On-Farm Orga**

Uploaded by: Tom Taylor

Position: FAV

## **Written Testimony in Favor of SB599 – On-Farm Organics and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Programs – Established**

February 20, 2026

**To: Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**

I am submitting testimony in favor of SB599, On-Farm Organics and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Programs.

As a community volunteer very involved in composting programs, I have seen firsthand the need for increased composting infrastructure to meet Maryland's environmental sustainability goals. There is much community interest in composting, but that interest is frustrated by the lack of composting facilities and funding to implement new programs and composting facilities.

With sufficient composting infrastructure, Maryland could achieve great progress in reducing food waste, decreasing landfill emissions, and improving soil with the nutrient-rich compost that would be produced.

These grant programs would go a long way toward accomplishing these goals. It is important to pass this bill now, regardless of presently-available funding sources, as a step toward fully funding the grant programs. SB 599 will codify the grant programs and will facilitate effective allocation of funding once those sources are identified.

This legislation will advance momentum in Maryland for the state's already adopted policies that support organics recycling, food waste recovery, and healthy soils. It will offer a pathway and signify the state's commitment to funding for program infrastructure and implementation, the lack of which has been a significant obstacle to progress with these policies.

It will support Maryland's already adopted wasted food law, which requires large food residual generators—including schools, supermarkets, and food processing facilities—to separate and divert food residuals from landfills or incinerators if they generate at least one ton of food residuals per week and are located near an organic recycling facility. An increase in composting infrastructure would facilitate greater implementation of this law.

Passing this will bill will be an important step toward environmental, health, equity, economic, and food security benefits for all Marylanders.

Please give a favorable report to SB599.

Sincerely,

Tom Taylor  
11 Laurel Hill Road, Unit G  
Greenbelt, MD 20770  
301-513-9524

# **MDFB - Support - SB599 On-Farm Organics & Wasted F**

Uploaded by: Tyler Hough

Position: FAV



## Maryland Farm Bureau

3358 Davidsonville Road | Davidsonville, MD 21035  
410-922-3426 | [www.mdfarmbureau.com](http://www.mdfarmbureau.com)

February 24, 2026

**To:** Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

**From:** Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

**RE:** **Support of SB599 On-Farm Organics & Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Programs**

On behalf of the nearly 7,000 member families of the Maryland Farm Bureau, I respectfully submit this written testimony in support of SB599 On-Farm Organics & Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Programs. This legislation establishes three coordinated grant programs that will strengthen Maryland's agricultural economy, expand food waste reduction efforts, and advance science-based composting and soil health practices across the state. SB599 creates the On-Farm Organics Diversion and Recycling Grant Program within the Maryland Department of Agriculture to support farmers, urban farmers, agricultural producers, soil conservation districts, and nonprofit partners in developing and implementing on-farm organics recycling, compost use, wasted food prevention, and food rescue activities. It also creates the Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Program and the County Wasted Food Reduction Block Grant Program within the Maryland Department of the Environment, providing essential funding for infrastructure, education, and technical assistance that reduce, rescue, and divert wasted food at the state and county level. These programs prioritize projects that provide direct, meaningful, and assured community benefits; reduce and rescue wasted food; and promote compost that meets Maryland's "general use" standard and the U.S. Composting Council's Seal of Testing Assurance, ensuring high-quality, minimally contaminated materials that protect farm soils and public trust.

This legislation aligns with long-standing agricultural policy principles supporting value-added on-farm enterprises, soil conservation, and responsible nutrient management. The Maryland Farm Bureau policy book affirms farmers' right to produce mulch and compost from both on-farm and off-farm sources and recognizes the importance of science-based best management practices that protect the environment while sustaining agricultural viability. SB599 advances these goals by enabling farmers to invest in clean, source-separated composting systems, on-farm processing improvements, and workforce capacity tied directly to soil health and food waste reduction outcomes. Furthermore, MDFB supports urban farming, infrastructure grants for urban agriculture, and programs that strengthen Maryland's food systems through increased local sourcing and food rescue. SB599's inclusion of urban farmers and agricultural producers, alongside its emphasis on food rescue and community-based benefits, reinforces those priorities and strengthens the connection between Maryland agriculture and the communities it serves.

The county block grants established under the bill will help ensure that local governments can invest in practical, shovel-ready solutions such as community drop-off sites, rural composting pads, and educational programs that support farmers and residents alike. These investments complement existing conservation programs and allow counties to collaborate with soil conservation districts and agricultural stakeholders to maximize waste diversion while improving soil structure, nutrient retention, and water quality. The bill also includes straightforward application processes and mechanisms to support applicants with limited resources or language barriers, making the program usable for small and mid-sized farm operations that often lack access to competitive grant funds. Taken together, SB599



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offers voluntary, incentive-based tools that expand opportunity without imposing new regulatory burdens, ensuring that farmers retain flexibility while gaining access to the resources necessary to enhance economic resilience.

Senate Bill 599 supports Maryland farmers, reinforces science-driven conservation principles, strengthens local food systems, and provides counties with targeted, flexible funding to reduce wasted food while expanding the supply of high-quality compost. These outcomes directly benefit both agricultural producers and Maryland communities. For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB599.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tyler Hough". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned below a horizontal line.

Tyler Hough

Director of Government Relations

*Please reach out to Tyler Hough, [though@marylandfb.org](mailto:though@marylandfb.org), with any questions*

**SB599 MDA LOI.pdf**

Uploaded by: Harrison Palmer

Position: INFO



# Maryland Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary

Wes Moore, Governor  
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor  
Kevin Atticks, Secretary  
Steven A. Connelly, Deputy Secretary

Agriculture | Maryland's Leading  
Industry

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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

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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.

**Contact:** Harrison Palmer, Chief of Staff  
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**MDE SB 599 INF.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jeremy D Baker

Position: INFO



**The Maryland Department of the Environment  
Secretary Serena McIlwain**

***Senate Bill 599***

***On-Farm Organics and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Programs - Established***

**Position:** Informational  
**Committee:** Education, Energy, and the Environment  
**Date:** February 24, 2026  
**From:** Jeremy D. Baker, Director of Government Relations

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The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) submits this **LETTER OF INFORMATION** for SB 599.

**Bill Summary**

SB 599 would establish three grant programs: On-Farm Organics Diversion and Recycling Grant Program, Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Program, and the County Wasted Food Reduction Block Grant Program.

**Position Rationale**

MDE supports this bill's goals and is appreciative of the work the sponsor has done to elevate this issue, but note the absence of a funding mechanism. The Office of Recycling already manages two programs—electronics and school compost—that are inactive due to a lack of resources. To successfully implement new programs outlined in the bill, MDE would require additional funding and staff, and suggests incorporating into the bill a sustainable funding mechanism.

MDE also proposes transitioning from individual project grants to a County Block Grant model to reduce administrative overhead. Under this system, funding would be distributed to counties proportional to their population, bypassing the need for a resource-intensive State review process. This approach allows counties to use their local expertise to better serve overburdened communities, while MDE retains its role in verifying eligible expenses at the end of each year.

MDE hopes this **INFORMATIONAL** testimony regarding SB 599 is helpful. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions.