

DELEGATE MARY A. LEHMAN
Legislative District 21
Prince George's and
Anne Arundel Counties

Government, Labor, and
Elections Committee

Chair

Local Government/Bi-County
Agencies and Administration
Subcommittee



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 163
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3114
800-492-7122 Ext. 3114
Mary.Lehman@house.maryland.gov

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB 164

State Building and Highway – Collection and Disposal of Yard Waste

February 4, 2026

Support

Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and Esteemed Members of the Committee:

I am asking for your favorable report for HB 164, a bill that prohibits both state employees and contractors from using single-use plastic bags for yard waste when working on state lands and along state highways. The House passed this bill in both 2024 and 2025. It was voted on and passed last year by the Senate Education, Energy and Education Committee but was not voted on in full Senate before end of 2025 Legislative Session.

The bill requires the yard waste, whether bagged or unbagged, to be disposed of at an organic recycling or a natural wood recycling facility. The Department of Environment has confirmed that these facilities have the capacity for the disposal of this waste. The bill makes an exemption when there is no organics recycling or natural wood recycling facility within thirty miles of where the yard waste is collected.

Instead of single-use plastic bags, the bill requires that state employees and contractors to either use a compostable container, such as a brown paper yard waste bag, or a container that will not be discarded with the yard waste, e.g., a reusable container. Under current Maryland law, there are no restrictions on the employment of single-use plastic containers for yard waste collection on the grounds of state buildings and along state highways.

HB 164 ensures that yard waste collected on state lands and along state highways is disposed of in a more environmentally conscious manner. When single-use plastic bags are used, the collected yard waste, along with the plastic bag, frequently ends up in landfill. According to the World Wildlife Fund, the bags then take up to twenty years to break down.¹ If they go to a composting facility, the plastic bags are often shredded along with the yard waste. The issue of disintegrating plastic forces the composting facilities to either invest in imperfect plastic-screening technology, which adds both time and cost to an already slow and expensive process, or to simply produce a contaminated product.

To date, over one third of Maryland's counties have enacted similar policies for residential yard waste pickup. It is time for the state to operate under the same standards.

Thank you and I urge a favorable report.

¹ World Wildlife Fund, "The Lifecycle of Plastics," July 1, 2021