

Testimony of Adam Ortiz in Support of
House Bill 589: Solid Waste Management – Organics Recycling and Waste Diversion –
Food Residuals
Environment and Transportation Committee
Maryland House of Delegates

Good afternoon. My name is Adam Ortiz, Director of the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection.

House Bill 589 requires generators that generate significant amounts of food residuals to separate the food residuals they generate from other waste if they are located within 30 miles of an organics recycling facility that has capacity and will accept that food residual for recycling. Generators must divert the separated food residuals from disposal by reducing the amount of food residuals they generate; donating consumable food; managing food residuals on-site; providing their food residuals for agricultural use, including for animal feed; or having their food residuals processed at an organics recycling facility. Any combination of these activities would meet the requirements of this bill.

The Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection supports House Bill 589. Organics are a major source of methane gas from landfills, so preventing these materials from being landfilled is beneficial to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Processing organics through composting is also a more cost-effective management alternative than disposal. In addition, products such as Leafgro® and Leafgro® Gold are models of how localities can be innovative when recycling organic materials into new, useful and marketable products.

In Montgomery County, our most recent waste composition study completed in 2017 determined that food residuals or food scraps make up a significant portion of our waste, and that the largest generator source is the commercial sector. We estimate that as much as 120,000 tons of food scraps were found disposed in the overall waste stream. The requirements proposed in House Bill 589 align well with our efforts to implement the activities and initiatives identified in our *Strategic Plan to Advance Composting, Compost Use and Food Scraps Diversion*.

House Bill 589 calls for generators of food scraps to reduce the amount of wasted food they generate, donate excess consumable food to meet the unmet needs of people, manage food scraps in systems developed on-site, and direct food for agricultural uses including animal feed. It also calls for generators of significant amounts of food scraps to separate them from other waste and direct them to organics recycling facilities which can accept them for processing. House Bill 589 also will ensure that as existing organics recycling facilities expand and additional organics recycling facilities are developed, generators with significant amounts of acceptable food scraps in proximity to those facilities will be required to implement food residuals recycling programs. This legislation serves to help in market development, attracting operators of food scraps recycling facilities to expand existing organics recycling facilities and encouraging additional operators to perhaps locate in the state of Maryland.

For all of these reasons, the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection supports proposed House Bill 589 and statewide requirements pertaining to diversion and recycling of food residuals.