



February 19, 2020

2020 SESSION POSITION PAPER: SUPPORT TESTIMONY
Montgomery County Food Council

BILL: HB0589: Solid Waste Management- Organics Recycling and Waste Diversion- Food Residuals
COMMITTEE: Environment & Transportation Committee
POSITION: Testimony of Support of House Bill 0589
BILL ANALYSIS: Requiring a certain person that generates food residuals to separate the food residuals from other solid waste and ensure that the food residuals are diverted from final disposal in a refuse disposal system in a certain manner; applying the requirements of the Act, beginning in certain years, to certain persons that generate certain amounts of food residuals; requiring the Department of the Environment to report to the General Assembly by December 1, 2021, and annually thereafter on the impact of waste diversion in the State; etc.

Dear Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein, and Members of the House Environment & Transportation Committee:

The Montgomery County Food Council urges you to **SUPPORT** this bill as it seeks to expand food waste composting and food scrap recycling efforts statewide, and will serve as a critical, positive step towards advancing the State's Zero Waste goals.

Expanding food waste composting in Maryland will benefit the environment by reducing the amounts of carbon dioxide and methane emissions that result from traditional waste disposal methods. Additionally, compost plays a critical role in improving soil health and resiliency, by increasing the soil's water infiltration and water retention capacity, which can ameliorate flooding issues caused or worsened by climate change.

The Food Council's Environmental Impact Working Group was heavily involved in the creation of Bill 28-16, "The Strategic Plan to Advance Composting, Compost Use, and Food Scraps Diversion" in Montgomery County, and has continued to advise the implementation of the Plan's recommendations since its release in April 2018. In accordance with the Plan, the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection has recently shared plans to launch a Commercial Composting Pilot Program. Through this initiative, 4,000 tons of commercially generated food scraps would be hauled to the Prince Georges County Organics Waste Facility in Upper Marlboro, MD during the contracted time period. This program will be a critical tool in moving Montgomery County closer to reaching our Zero Waste goals, and through HB0589, jurisdictions throughout the State can take similar steps to reduce their environmental footprint.

This Pilot Program also exemplifies that there is insufficient food waste processing capacity throughout the region. For instance, in Montgomery County, it's estimated that 79,000 tons of food scraps are generated by the commercial sector on an annual basis, yet there is no nearby facility that can accept all of this material, nor the additional 68,000 tons generated by family residences¹. Passage of HB0589 would encourage investment in and implementation of necessary food waste composting infrastructure. HB0589 will also encourage businesses, institutions, and organizations throughout the State to be more conscious of their environmental impact, effectively advancing statewide sustainability and food waste-reduction efforts. For these reasons, the Montgomery County Food Council urges you to vote **FOR** this bill.

¹ Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Solid Waste Services Montgomery County, Maryland. *Strategic Plan to Advance Composting, Compost Use, and Food Scraps Diversion in Montgomery County, Maryland*. April 2018.



The Montgomery County Food Council is an independent council formed and led by individual community members and representatives of local businesses, government, non-profit organizations, and educational institutions. Our mission is to bring together a diverse representation of stakeholders to improve the environmental, economic, social and nutritional health of Montgomery County, Maryland through the creation of a robust, local, sustainable food system. Our vision is to cultivate a vibrant food system in Montgomery County that consciously produces, distributes, and recycles food, making it accessible to all residents while promoting the health of the local food economy, its consumers, and the environment.

For more information, please contact: Heather Bruskin, MCFC Executive Director at the email and phone number below.

