



Olivia Bartlett, DoTheMostGood Maryland Team

Committee: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Testimony on: SB0483 – Solid Waste Management – Organics Recycling and Waste Diversion – Food Residuals

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: February 10, 2021

Bill Contact: Senator Shelly Hettleman

DoTheMostGood (DTMG) is a progressive grass-roots organization with more than 2500 members who live in a wide range of communities in Montgomery and Frederick Counties, from Bethesda near the DC line north to Frederick and from Poolesville east to Silver Spring and Olney. DTMG supports legislation and activities that keep its members healthy and safe in a clean environment, that support and uplift all members of its communities, and that promote equity across all of our diverse communities. DTMG strongly supports SB0483 because diverting food waste from landfills will help Maryland meet its goals for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions which contribute to climate change, will help generate new green jobs, and will increase food donation.

Disposing of organic food waste in landfills and incinerators contributes to climate change. Burning food waste produces the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide (CO₂) and other emissions that adversely affect the environment, and food waste decomposes anaerobically in landfills to produce methane, which is at least 80 times more potent than CO₂ as a GHG. According to the 2017 Maryland GHG Inventory produced by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), landfills in Maryland produce almost as much methane as wastewater management and agriculture, and only slightly less methane than what is produced by Maryland's natural gas industry. This is largely due to anaerobic decomposition of organic waste – mainly food waste – in the landfills.

In contrast, composting food waste turns this discarded organic material into a nutrient-rich product that helps sequester carbon and has both environmental and economic benefits, including reduction of GHG emissions and contributing to green jobs. According to the Maryland Environmental Service, food scraps make up about 43% of compostable material and 15% of the total waste generated. In Maryland, this translates to an estimated 998,630 tons of food waste generated each year. However, only about 12% of food waste is recycled in Maryland; the remaining food waste is disposed in landfills or incinerated.

SB0483 will address this problem by requiring large-scale food waste generators to separate food residuals if an organics recycling facility that has the capacity and is willing to accept food residuals exists within a 30-mile radius.

According to the Maryland Environmental Service, there are at least a dozen food waste hauling and recovery companies operating in Maryland and at least five major grocery store chains in Maryland collect food scraps and/or have a food donation program.

The benefits of composting food waste include:

- Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions
- Extension of landfill/incinerator capacity
- Production of a highly desirable soil conditioner that partially replaces the need for chemical fertilizers and can be sold to offset the costs of composting
- Reduction of need for irrigation
- Creation of new green jobs
- Improvement of water and air quality

SB0483 also allows donation of **servable** food as a waste reduction strategy. When similar legislation was passed in Vermont, food donation increased by at least 30%. SB0483 would therefore also address another major problem in Maryland. According to the Maryland Food Bank, historically, about 1 in 8 (12.5%) Marylanders has been food insecure in recent years. During the current coronavirus pandemic, that number is much higher.

Therefore, SB0483 will be good for Maryland's environment, will help Maryland meet its GHG reduction goals, and will help address food insecurity across the state.

For all these reasons, DTMG strongly supports SB0483 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report on this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

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