



February 8, 2021

Testimony on SB0483/HB0264
Solid Waste Management - Organics Recycling and Waste Diversion - Food Residuals
Environment and Transportation Committee
Hearing Date: February 10, 2021

Organization: Sunrise Movement Baltimore
Person Submitting: Katherine Longabaugh
Position: Favorable

My name is Katherine, a resident of Baltimore, District 43. I am a member of the Sunrise Movement Baltimore, a movement led by young people fighting against the climate crisis. This testimony represents my support for SB0483/HB0264, the Organics Recycling and Waste Diversion Act.

Food waste produces methane, a very potent greenhouse gas that contributes to the climate crisis. Methane yields 84 times more efficacy compared to CO₂ at trapping heat in our atmosphere.¹ The USDA estimates that 30-40% of our food supply is wasted at a retail and consumer level.² That is a lot of waste! This food waste is the single largest source of waste in landfills and incinerators and the third largest source of methane in landfills in the US according to the EPA,³ not to mention how the invaluable environmental and labor resources continue to be wasted to grow and transport this soon-to-be-wasted food.

Here in Baltimore that waste is incinerated and creates toxic air pollution too. Baltimore has among the highest rates of breathing related diseases of cities in the country and we Baltimore residents spend \$55 million annually on health costs related to burning trash.⁴ Composting is an essential part of reducing incineration and landfill use and increasing reuse and recycling.

The first easy solution to this problem is to combat food waste and feed our communities. Businesses and organizations should donate their extra food to help those fighting food insecurity. In the US, 1 in 9 people and 1 in 6 children struggle with hunger, and in 2018 11% of Marylanders struggled with food insecurity.⁵ That number has only grown with the pandemic.

Second, food that cannot be donated should be composted for communities to reap its innumerable benefits. Compost nourishes our soil to grow more food and plants, reduces and/or

¹ <https://mde.state.md.us/programs/Air/ClimateChange/MCCC/MWG/MWGMDEPres02242017.pdf>

² <https://www.usda.gov/foodlossandwaste/why>

³ Ibid.

⁴ <https://ilsr.org/report-baltimore-zero-waste/>

⁵ <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/maryland>



eliminates the need for toxic pesticides and herbicides, improves water retention, and even sequesters carbon from our atmosphere. It can be used in habitat and wetlands revitalization and to improve contaminated and marginal soils.

In Baltimore and throughout Maryland, compost can be used for community gardens and farms to grow local food and combat food insecurity. Urban and suburban farming also helps to fight the more extremes of the urban heat island effect and frequent flooding our cities endure due to climate change. There are plenty of benefits to compost use in our own communities.

Compost and food recovery would provide many full-time jobs in our communities. According to the Institute for Local Self-Reliance, composting would create twice as many jobs as landfills.⁶ This bill will provide economic benefits to new and existing composting facilities and those working in soil remediation. We must grow green jobs to move Maryland forward!

In high school I was part of the Y Earth Service Corps where I learned about the methane emissions of food waste and the benefits of compost. We helped our peers sort their waste at lunch and used the mulch our compost provider brought back to us for our rain garden in a beneficial cycle. We saved costs on trash hauling too. Being originally from Seattle where residential composting is required, and coming to Maryland for college where composting programs vary, was quite a change. It took effort to figure out how to compost and how much our college was actually composting. Composting has so many benefits and we should make it easier for everyone to take part in and thus give back to our communities too.

The Organic Recycling and Waste Diversion Bill will not only help Maryland fight climate change by reducing emissions, food waste, and improving soil health, but help feed food-insecure Marylanders and provide green jobs in our communities.

We encourage a FAVORABLE report for this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Katherine Longabaugh
317 E 30th St
Baltimore, MD 21218
District 43

⁶<https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/LAND/RecyclingandOperationsprogram/Documents/Fact%20Sheet%20-%20Composting%20in%20Maryland.pdf>