

# TAKOMA PARK MOBILIZATION

## Environment Committee

**Committee:** Education, Health & Environmental Affairs  
**Testimony on:** SB483 - “Solid Waste Management--Organics Waste Management and Waste Diversion--Food Residuals”  
**Organization:** Takoma Park Mobilization Environment Committee  
**Person**  
**Submitting:** Diana Younts, co-chair  
**Position:** Favorable  
**Hearing Date:** February 10, 2021

Dear Mr. Chairman and Committee Members,

Thank you for allowing our testimony today in support of SB483. We urge you to vote favorably for SB483. The bill will further Montgomery County’s zero waste and climate action plans; serve to reduce methane and other greenhouse gasses and toxic pollutants emitted by landfills, incinerators, and agriculture; reduce run off to our waterways and the Chesapeake Bay; rebuild healthy soils; and create jobs.

**More than 25% food supply wasted:** More than 25% of the overall food supply at the retail and consumer level going uneaten and wasted. Large generators, those that produce more than one ton of food waste per week, produce more than half of Maryland’s organic waste.

**Food Donations:** SB483 also allows food donation as a waste reduction strategy. When similar legislation passed in Vermont, **food donation increased by at least 30%**, taking usable food and getting it into the hands of food banks and hungry people.

**Reduces Maryland’s greenhouse gas emissions:** According to the EPA, food scraps and food waste are the largest portion of waste sent by municipalities to landfills and incinerators, accounting for as much as 24% of waste. Diversion of food waste from landfills and incinerators will reduce landfill methane emissions and the toxic emissions from incinerators. Landfills account for 17% of Maryland’s methane emissions, a greenhouse gas that is 86 times more potent than CO<sub>2</sub> in its first 20 years after emission.

**Complements Montgomery County’s Zero Waste Plan:** Composting Montgomery County’s organic waste is an essential component of its Zero Waste Plan and to that end, Montgomery County has instituted a pilot project to compost food waste generated by certain businesses. One of the biggest barriers to achieving its zero waste goals is the lack of a sufficient number of

nearby, composting facilities. This bill will stimulate investment in and expansion of needed capacity to handle recycling of food waste and in the process create jobs to support that expansion.

**Complements Montgomery County's Climate Action Plan:** The bill also supports Montgomery County's Climate Action Plan by reducing Montgomery County's greenhouse gas emissions from the Dickerson incinerator. Diversion of food waste from that incinerator will also reduce toxic emissions from the incinerator. The Dickerson trash incinerator is the single largest industrial emitter of air pollutants in Montgomery County, producing approximately 740 tons of air pollutants and sends 180,000 tons of toxic ash to landfills in Virginia.

**Builds Healthy Soils & Reduces Runoff:** Food waste is an excellent source of material for making compost and adding compost to our soils results in building healthy soils. Healthy soils and the plants that grow in them, hold and sequester carbon in the ground. Healthy soils are rich in microbes, high in organic matter, are stable, and retain water.

We need sustainable, long term solutions to managing our organic waste and supporting the growth of composting is a win-win strategy.

For these reasons we urge to vote favorably for SB483.