



**TESTIMONY TO THE MARYLAND SENATE
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS
Senate Bill 483 (Senator Hettleman)
Solid Waste Management - Organics Recycling and Waste Diversion - Food Residuals**

POSITION: Support

February 10, 2021

Dear Chair Pinsky and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony in support of House Bill 264 on behalf of Fair Farms. The Fair Farms campaign of Waterkeepers Chesapeake brings together consumers, farmers, public health professionals, and conservationists to advocate for a food system that is equitable, fair to farmers, invests in homegrown healthy foods, and restores our waterways. We are a growing movement of over 35,000 Marylanders and close to 200 partners across the state.

Fair Farms resoundingly supports this bill, and its overall goal to reduce food waste and convert it into valuable products like compost. Improving soil health is critical, and this initiative will have a positive impact on water quality, ecosystem health, and public health. Healthy soils can act as a carbon sink to help balance out greenhouse gas emissions. They are rich in microbes, high in organic matter, store carbon, are stable, and retain water. The addition of well-made compost can contribute to soil health by delivering the following benefits:

- Adding organic matter to soil,
- Enhancing plant growth,
- Adding microbial populations and activity to soil,
- Decreasing disease and pest issues,
- Retaining nutrients and water in soils,
- Helping urban, suburban, and rural soils, and
- Storing carbon and cutting landfill methane emissions.

SB 483 will encourage increased composting and composting capacity/infrastructure in the state. To help build healthy soils, farmers need not only access to high-quality compost but also assistance in composting onsite at farms. This bill allows large food waste generators to implement any number of strategies to reduce waste, such as providing for the collection and transportation of food residuals for agricultural use, including as animal feed and in

composting operations. We urge you not only to pass this bill but also to take up future legislation to support on-farm composting and farm use of high-quality compost.

We urge a favorable report on this key bill.

Respectfully submitted,

Shelby Kalm
Fair Farms Campaign Manager
Waterkeepers Chesapeake