



Committee: Environment and Transportation
**Testimony on: HB 264 - “Solid Waste Management -
Organics Recycling and Waste Diversion -- Food Residuals”**
Organization: Maryland Compost Advocacy Coalition
Representative: Diana Younts
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: January 27, 2021

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for allowing our testimony today. The Maryland Compost Advocacy Coalition brings together environmental, business, and civic organizations to advance composting policies in Maryland 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 divert food to much needed food pantries.

We strongly urge you to support HB 0264. This Organics Recycling bill would require entities that produce more than two tons of food waste per week AND that are within 30 miles of a compost or other food recovery facility to compost or otherwise divert this material from the waste stream through donations, reduction, or anaerobic digestion. In 2024, the requirement would apply to entities that produce more than one ton of food waste per week.

A version of this bill was introduced in the 2020 session, but this year’s bill contains changes to address concerns raised by small businesses. For instance, the bill no longer applies to entities that produce less than one ton of food waste per week and it also contains waiver protections for entities that cannot find a cost competitive diversion option.

Food waste is a persistent problem, with more than 25% of the overall food supply at the retail and consumer level going uneaten and wasted. Large generators of food waste produce most of the organic waste in the state – facilities that generate more than one ton of food waste a week contribute more than half of Maryland’s organic waste. HB 0264

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.

Moreover, the Organics Recycling and Waste Diversion bill will stimulate investment in and expansion of needed capacity to handle recycling of food waste as well as encourage economic development by bringing businesses to Maryland. The bill will reduce solid waste disposal and at the same time capture a valuable resource to improve soil quality, support agriculture, conserve water, and reduce and sequester greenhouse gas emissions.

It will help to accomplish these goals while at the same time supporting local food systems and creating green jobs in Maryland. Expanding composting and local compost use could support almost 1,400 new full-time jobs in Maryland, according to a 2013 study by the Institute for Local Self-Reliance. Expanding compost would support both new and existing compost facilities, and also support Maryland businesses that use compost for soil erosion control, stormwater management, green infrastructure, and other purposes.

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 CO₂ in its first 20 years after emission.

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 51 percent of waste. According to the 2017 book "Drawdown--The Most comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming," reducing food waste offers solutions to the number three cause of global warming. Ten of the 80 ranked solutions to protect the climate intersect with food waste or compost in some way (food waste reduction, bioplastics, regenerative agriculture, methane digesters, household recycling, landfill methane, composting, nutrient management, and biochar). Together they underscore the importance of redirecting valuable organic materials from polluting disposal facilities into soil amendments.

Food scraps and waste are 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 carbon in the ground, sequestering carbon. Healthy soils are rich in microbes, high in organic matter, store carbon, 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 you to support HB 0264, the Organics Recycling and Waste Diversion bill.

Thank you,

Atlas Organics
Baltimore Beyond Plastic
Catonsville Indivisibles
Cedar Lane Environmental Justice Ministry
Clean Water Action
Echotopia, LLC
Environmental Justice Ministry Cedar LNe Unitarian Universalist Church
Envision Frederick County
Frack-Free Frostburg
Frederick Compost Working Group
Greenbelt Climate Action Network
Howard County Association of Student Councils
Howard County Climate Action (www.HoCoClimateAction.org)
Indivisible HoCo MD
Institute for Local Self Reliance
Marriotts Ridge High School Environmental Club
Maryland Legislative Coalition
MD Campaign for Environmental Human Rights
MLC Climate Justice Wing
Montgomery Countryside Alliance
Montgomery County Food Council
Mountain Maryland Movement
Oakland Mills High School Climate Activism Club
Our Revolution Maryland
Safe Healthy Playing Fields Inc
Safe Skies Maryland
Strong Future Maryland
Sugarloaf Citizens' Association
Sunrise Movement Baltimore
Sunrise Movement Howard County
Takoma Park Mobilization Environment Committee
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland
Waterkeepers Chesapeake
WISE

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