



**HB264 – Organics Recycling and Waste Diversion – Food Residuals  
Testimony before House Environment and Transportation Committee  
January 27, 2020  
Position: Favorable**

Mr. Chair, Mr. Vice Chair and members of the committee, my name is Liz Kato, and I represent the 700+ members of Indivisible Howard County. We are providing written testimony today in **support of HB264**, to provide a constructive solution to the problem of food waste in Maryland. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members).

Food waste is a persistent problem, with over 25% of the overall food supply at the retail and consumer level going uneaten and wasted. Whether landfilled or burned, the waste generates methane and carbon dioxide and is a major driver of climate change. Methane is a potent greenhouse gas that is 86 times more potent for warming the climate than carbon dioxide, and landfills contribute 17% of Maryland's methane.

Fortunately, this problem has a solution. Most of the organic waste in Maryland landfills comes from large generators of food waste. HB264 will significantly lower Maryland's greenhouse gas emissions by requiring these facilities, such as food processors and supermarkets, to divert food waste from landfills and incinerators and instead choose one of a range of zero waste strategies: sending food waste to a compost or anaerobic digestion facility, reducing waste, donating servable food, managing waste in a system installed onsite, or diverting food waste for agricultural purposes. We can realize these environmental benefits with minimal economic impact – HB264 only applies to facilities that produce more than two tons of food waste per week, only applies if the facility has access to a nearby organics recycling facility, and allows these facilities flexibility to choose from a range of options. Furthermore, the law will create business opportunities for local entrepreneurs to respond to the need for zero waste options.

HB264 helps more than just the climate. Compost improves our soil health. When added to soil, compost adds carbon and can reduce urban stormwater pollutants by 60 to 95%. HB264 also addresses hunger in our community. Because of the COVID pandemic, many more Marylanders are food insecure this year than last year. When legislation similar to HB264 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.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

**We respectfully urge a favorable report.**

Liz Kato  
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Columbia, MD