

LORIG CHARKOUDIAN
Legislative District 20
Montgomery County

Economic Matters Committee

Subcommittees

Public Utilities

Workers' Compensation



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB0264 - SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT - ORGANICS RECYCLING AND WASTE
DIVERSION - FOOD RESIDUALS

TESTIMONY OF DELEGATE LORIG CHARKOUDIAN
JANUARY 27th, 2020

Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein, and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

As our statewide effort to reduce emissions is underway, it is essential that our policy choices during this critical period reflect our multidimensional approach to addressing climate change and ensuring sustainability. We must address organic waste as a strategy to decrease emission output and further environmental protection.

Over 25% of the overall food supply is inevitably wasted in retail businesses and at home. When this waste ends up in incinerators and landfills, it generates methane and carbon dioxide, greenhouse gases that heavily contribute to global warming.

Composting turns this discarded organic material into a nutrient-rich product that helps sequester carbon while improving soil health and resiliency, and employing Marylanders. This is an efficient use of waste that contributes to our climate goals.

This legislation would require large-scale food waste generators within a 30-mile radius of organics recycling facilities to source-separate residuals. These recycling facilities need to have the capacity and willingness to accept the organic material for processing. This bill gives waste generators flexible options in order to achieve the goals set. For example, instead of sending food waste to organic recycling facilities, generators could implement their own methods of reducing waste, such as self-management onsite, agricultural usage, or through donations.

Composting has the added environmental benefit of improved soil quality. When added to soil, compost adds carbon and can reduce urban stormwater pollutants by 60 to 95%. Soil health has been in decline, in part due to our broken food system. We extract nutrients when we grow plants in soil, but do not return those nutrients to the soil. Adding compost to our soil strategy replenishes the soil microbiome and improves soil health.

An increased commitment to composting can also bring economic benefits. In a 2013 study, the Institute for Local Self Reliance found that increasing composting programs in our state could support nearly 1,400 new full-time jobs¹. An expanding industry for organic material disposal could make an incredible impact in the aggregate.

We've seen the positive impact of organic waste bans in other states that have implemented similar policies. 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. In 2014, Massachusetts made it illegal to dispose of a certain amount of generated commercial organic waste. By 2017, the state's Environmental Protection agency found the quantity of organic waste collected was nearly three times the baseline amount. Additionally, the state garnered \$175 million in economic activity in that short period of time.

Encouraging composting in businesses and other institutions will facilitate a multitude of economic and environmental benefits. These benefits will translate into new jobs, enhanced green infrastructure, healthier soil, improved food systems, and reduced emissions.

I respectfully request a favorable report of HB264.

¹ Platt, Brenda, Bell, Bobby, and Cameron Harsh. "Pay Dirt: Composting in Maryland to Reduce Waste, Create Jobs, and Protect the Bay." May 2013. Institute for Local Self-Reliance. <https://ilsr.org/paydirt/>