



**TESTIMONY TO THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORTATION**

**House Bill 264 (Delegate Charkoudian)
Solid Waste Management - Organics Recycling and Waste Diversion - Food
Residuals**

Position: Support

January 27, 2021

Dear Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein, and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

I am writing in support of House Bill 264 – Solid Waste Management - Organics Recycling and Waste Diversion - Food Residuals and its overall goal to reduce food waste and convert it into valuable products like compost.

The Million Acre Challenge works with farmers, policy-makers, and consumers to support healthy soils on Maryland farms and across the greater Chesapeake region. Our collaborative aims to catalyze the growing movement to achieve no fewer than one million acres of healthy soils in Maryland by 2030. This is a collaborative project of:

- **Chesapeake Bay Foundation**
- **Fair Farms** (a project of Waterkeepers Chesapeake)
- **Future Harvest**
- **Hatcher Group**
- **Institute for Energy and Environmental Research**
- **Institute for Local Self-Reliance**

Healthy soils can act as a huge 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
- Storing carbon and cutting landfill methane emissions

HB 264 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.

Thank you for your consideration,

Amanda Cather

Project Director, Million Acre Challenge

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Additional Supporters:

Bonnie Raindrop, *Central Maryland Beekeepers Association*

Carolyn E. Ricketts, *Climate Stewards of Greater Annapolis*

Emily Ranson, *Clean Water Action*

Gabriel Bustos, *Elemental Education*

Kate Medina, *Charles Koiner Conservancy for Urban Farming*

Kathy Phillips, *Assateague Coastal Trust*

Meghan Ochal, *Dicot Farm*

Melanie Smith-Bell, *Community FARE*

Mike Houston, *Takoma Park Silver Spring Food Cooperative*

Samuel White, *Leaning Pine Farm*