Committee: Appropriations
Testimony on: HB566 - School Construction-Design Documents-Waste Disposal Infrastructure
Organization: MLC Climate Justice Wing
Submitting: Diana Younts, Co-Chair
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: February 17, 2022

Dear M. Chair and Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing our testimony today in support of HB566. The MLC Climate Justice Wing, a statewide coalition of over 50 grassroots and professional organizations, urges you to vote favorably on HB566.. In Maryland almost a million tons of food waste is generated each year with only 15.5% of these scraps being diverted and the remainder is sent to the landfill or incinerators where it produces greenhouse gas emissions, noxious pollutants that greatly harm the health of community members who live near such facilities.

This bill goes towards solving that problem, while at the same time educating our children about the value of diverting food scraps, by creating in schools the infrastructure necessary for kids to separate their waste into trash, recycling, and food scraps which can be composted and otherwise diverted from the waste stream. As such, it is a nice complement to other bills this session promoting diverting food scraps from the waste stream, but do not provide for the necessary infrastructure for kids to do so. Having such programs is a lovely way to teach kids about the value of diverting food waste and proper recycling of other waste and will help to instill life-long good habits.

Food Waste Diversion Feeds Hungry Children. The primary goals of these initiatives is to feed hungry students and reduce plate waste before the food becomes inedible. Allowing edible food to go to waste creates missed opportunities in the school food value chain. 1 in 7 children in Maryland face hunger. Diverting otherwise wasted food to these children could be an essential source of nutrition.

Food Waste Suffocates in Landfills Creating Highly Potent Greenhouse Gas Emissions. Food waste in landfills produces methane, a greenhouse gas that is 86 times more potent than carbon dioxide in its first 20 years of release to the atmosphere. In contrast, compost is a

valuable soil amendment that enhances soil fertility, soil water-holding capacity, soil organic matter, and soil structure. In addition to farming and gardens, compost can be utilized for managing stormwater run-off and preventing soil erosion (for example, via rain gardens, green roofs, bioswales, compost filter socks, and other "green infrastructure" projects).

For these reasons, we recommend a FAVORABLE report in committee.