

SB124 / HB150 - SUPPORT

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Education Health and Environmental Affairs Committee

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Dear Chair Pinsky and Members of the Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

I am a Senior from Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School and a member of the student-driven Coalition to Re-Imagine School Waste, with partners from other high schools and the Montgomery County Public Schools. We strongly believe that SB124/HB150 (Public Schools – Grant Program to Reduce and Compost School Waste) must be supported by your committee.

Throughout my time in high school, I've learned about all the things we should and could be doing to prevent damage from climate change. When I began learning about the easy solution of composting, I couldn't help but feel determined to teach others. Introducing composting into the school system and community would have a tremendously positive impact on saving the environment.

I feel disgusted when I have to throw away my food waste in trash cans, rather than a compost bin where the food waste can turn to soil. I have even seen students throw their food away in recycling bins when there are no trash cans around. From the waste sorts we've done with local elementary schools, we've found that over 85-90% of the waste we throw away in schools could be diverted away from dangerous landfills and incinerators. About 60% of the things kids throw away at school are food, milk, or juice. In Maryland, almost a million tons of food waste is generated each year with only 15.5% of these scraps being diverted. By creating composting programs in schools, we can also salvage and share unused/uneaten foods and offer those foods to the hungry. We must and we CAN do a better job.

Equally important, the soil created from composted food is nutrient-rich for our farms, and it actually captures carbon and methane – thereby reducing the dangerous greenhouse gasses otherwise created in landfills and by incinerators.

Time is running out. Teaching all students about the importance and value of composting and food recovery will allow students to understand the significance of their actions, and become more conscious about where their waste goes. With more food waste reaching landfills and incinerators, and more methane gas being produced, our environment will be damaged past the point of repair.

This is about my future - and the future of my peers. I want to protect it. I urge you to support SB124.