

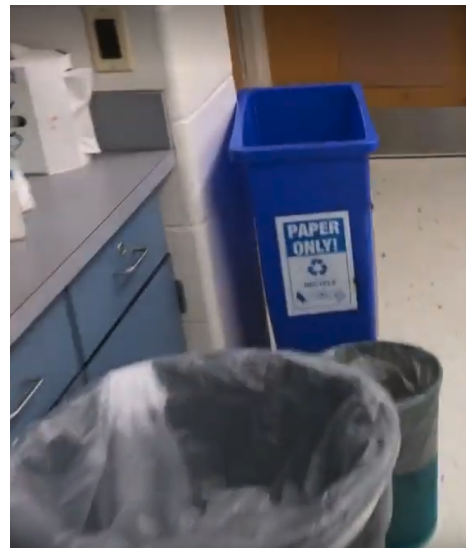
**Testimony Supporting SB0124**  
**Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee**  
**January 19, 2022**

**Position: SUPPORT!!!**

As an MCPS PreK teacher who serves one breakfast and two lunches per day in the classroom, I am writing to express my fervent support for SB0124, sponsored by Senator Hettleman, to create a grant program to support schools in preventing, reducing, and composting food waste.

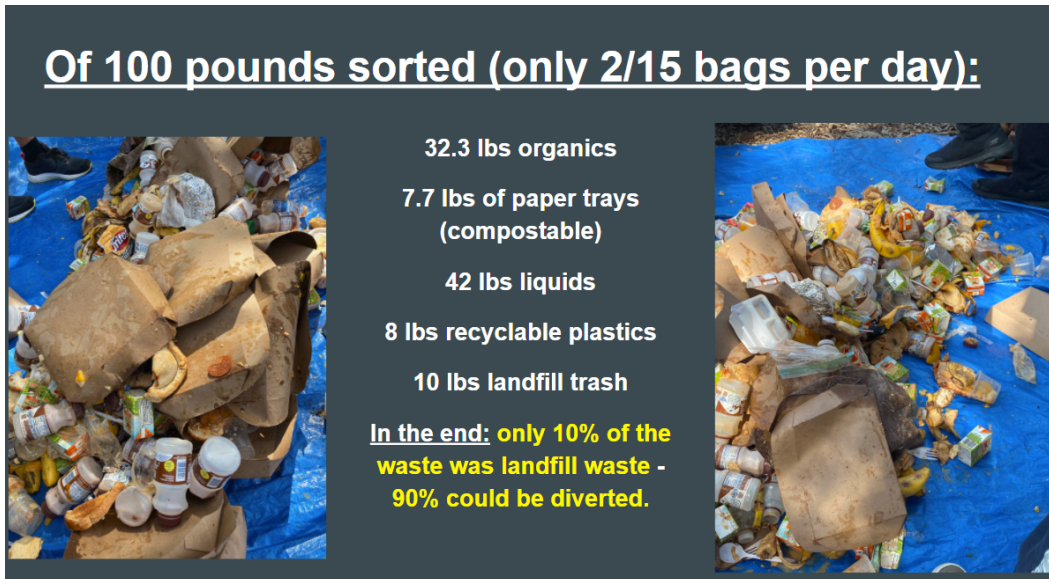
When I started in PreK in September 2019, I was horrified to witness both the waste in serving regular-sized food portions to 4-year-olds and the poor guidance and management of recyclables and food waste. Although our school had been a MD Green School since 2014 and doing well with paper and mixed recyclables, as a 2nd grade teacher whose students ate in the cafeteria, I hadn't personally been able to observe our food waste issue.

The question of composting food onsite was entirely closed by MPCS regulations. I know because while participating in a Drawdown workshop that fall, I had hoped to pilot food composting at least for Prek and was thwarted by those regulations. I had been a Compost Crew customer at home (and switched to a successful backyard compost tumbler), but it seemed insurmountable to organize a compost pickup service for my classroom alone, on top of everything else a teacher does!



<p><b>2019</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*36 total PreK students regularly use one trash bin</li> <li>*the blue paper recycle bin is underused, mainly for drawing/writing paper/copies</li> <li>*2 teachers use a mixed plastic/metal bin irregularly</li> <li>*all that you see above goes into trash because we haven't established processes and habits with our 4yo students, and food composting is a pipe dream</li> </ul>	<p><b>2022</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*29 total PreK students regularly use 1 trash bin, 1 paper recycling bin and 1 small mixed plastic/metal bin</li> <li>*We now reuse and then recycle paper trays</li> <li>*We have switched to pouring small recyclable paper cups of milk or water from our new bottle filling station.</li> <li>*We use only as much milk as needed each day and recycle many fewer empty milk bottles than previously</li> <li>*We have trained children to dump food waste into the trash and recycle plastic lunch packs and serving cups</li> <li>*<b>HOWEVER</b>, we are still landfilling/incinerating <b>many pounds of food waste</b> each day, and Food Services is still providing too much food in all kinds of noncompostable packaging.</li> </ul>
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I've worked on this because I have control of my classroom waste and I couldn't be more aware of the contribution to dangerously powerful methane emissions that are created by the food waste in a single school, never mind a school system that serves 160,000 students.



Data from the Food Waste Warriors trash-dive at an MCPS middle school

The rest of the school needs support. though, and at Rock View, we are very fortunate to have been connected with the [Maryland Coalition to Re-Imagine School Waste and its student-led Food Waste Warrior program](#). Starting soon, this forward-thinking, grant-winning project will provide my school with the support and infrastructure to make food composting available, easy and habitual.

Their plan is extraordinarily simple and cost-efficient, even including a stipend for building-service workers who need to learn (and help children learn) a new set of practices. This program and others like it, established by the passage of this bill, will

- *provide a market for local business: we can responsibly dispose of our waste and generate a usable soil product on the other end.*
- *reduce food waste suffocation in landfills creating highly potent greenhouse gases such as methane. In contrast, when converted into compost, food waste can sequester carbon in soils.*
- *encourage food waste reduction at the front end, leading to savings of edible food and school budgets. Developing more efficient, less wasteful food programs is good for everyone.*

Of all the things we can do at the state level to support better participation in climate rescue actions, SB0124 is the simplest and most powerful. Teaching our young people by developing composting infrastructure is a key component of Maryland's fight against climate change.

Sincerely,

Heidi Mordhorst

Bethesda Resident, Rock View ES Green School Leader & PreK Teacher