



**SB0229 Environment – On–Farm Composting Facilities –
Permit Exemption
Testimony before
Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs
January 25, 2022
Position: Favorable**

Mr. Chair, Madame Vice Chair and members of the committee, my name is Elizabeth Fixsen, and I represent the 750+ members of Indivisible Howard County. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members). We are providing written testimony today in **support of SB0229**, to exempt from permit requirements on-site composting by farms up to 40,000 sq. ft. as long as they meet other exemption requirements.

Currently, a permit is not required for a facility that uses no more than 5,000 square feet in support of composting if it meets certain conditions. This bill would allow a facility up to 40,000 square feet to be exempt from permitting if it meets the other conditions for permit exemption. Allowing larger facilities a permit exemption, as long as they meet other permit exemption requirements, will increase on-farm composting in the state of Maryland.

However, we would ask that the bill be amended to include a provision for reporting quantity and source of off-farm waste accepted by the facility and to require that any off-farm materials brought onto the farm must be incorporated within 24 hours. (These concerns are more fully addressed in testimony by Emily Ransom of Clean Water Action.)

Composting of organic materials has many benefits. It diverts material from disposal, reduces greenhouse gas emissions, and creates a valuable product. Modern agriculture uses compost and mulch on annual crops, perennials, orchards, vineyards, and grasslands. Compost improves soil properties, provides nutrients in a stable organic form, increases plant growth and health, and conserves water. Mulch reduces weed germination, moderates soil temperature, and conserves water.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

We respectfully urge a favorable report.

Elizabeth Fixsen
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¹ <https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/LAND/RecyclingandOperationsprogram/Documents/Permitting%20Guidance%20-%20Final%20Revised%201.22.2019.pdf>

¹ <https://mocofoodcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Kaley-Laleker-and-Tariq-Masood-On-Farm-Composting.pdf>

¹ <https://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/organics/farming#:~:text=>