



Mission: To improve public health in Maryland through education and advocacy *Vision:* Healthy Marylanders living in Healthy Communities

SB124, Public Schools – Grant Program to Reduce and Compost School Waste

Hearing Date: Wednesday, January 19, 2022

Committee: Education Health and Environmental Affairs Committee

Position: SUPPORT

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

Rising temperatures, disruption to the food supply, more frequent infectious and vector-borne diseases, heat-related health conditions, population displacement, fires - are all climate risks that directly impact public health. The Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA) is, understandably, strongly in favor of SB124, the Public Schools Grant Program to Reduce and Compost School Waste and we urge your committee to value it's lasting benefits.

Composting is one of the simplest and most effective ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It's also a wise way to reduce the amount of edible food that currently goes into the trash, so we can instead feed the hungry. Students throughout Maryland are eager to find climate solutions they can take part in. Composting and reducing food waste at schools is a clear and positive investment for our students.

As you may know, landfills and incinerators create the 3rd largest source of greenhouse gasses in the United States, especially methane. The only reason these dangerous gasses are created there is because wet foods (organic materials) are trapped under plastics to decompose and release toxins, or inefficiently burned to create ash (would you throw a melon rind in the fireplace?). Simply removing foods from landfills and incinerators and enabling them to naturally compost not only creates nutrient-rich soil with which to grow new food, but the soil captures carbon as it composts (removing toxins from the air), and it removes the cause for methane and carbon from landfills. It makes so much sense.

In schools, more than 50% of waste is either food or liquids like unused milk or juice. It's unthinkable that we don't automatically compost it. We must do a better job of teaching our students that there's no "away" when they throw things away. We must pay attention to the food waste problem in our schools and make proactive, positive plans to adjust the way we manage how we throw food away, or share it.

The MdPHA thanks Senator Hettleman for introducing this very logical and purposeful bill to start moving Maryland in the right direction with respect to food waste. We hope the Education, Health and Environment Committee will support SB124!

The Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA) is a nonprofit, statewide organization of public health professionals dedicated to improving the lives of all Marylanders through education, advocacy, and collaboration. We support public policies consistent with our vision of healthy Marylanders living in healthy, equitable, communities.

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