



January 19, 2022

The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky, Chair
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, Suite 2W
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Senate Bill 124 – Public Schools – Grant Program to Reduce and Compost School Waste

Dear Chair Pinsky and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) has reviewed Senate Bill 124 entitled *Public Schools – Grant Program to Reduce and Compost School Waste* and would like to provide additional information regarding this bill.

Senate Bill 124 would establish the Grant Program to Reduce and Compost School Waste, the purpose of which would be to provide grant funding to county boards of education and public schools to develop and implement programs for reducing food waste and establishing composting of pre-and post-consumer waste. The bill outlines several types of food waste reduction and composting projects that would be eligible for grant funding, and prioritization factors to be considered in awarding grants. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) would be responsible for administering the grant program and issuing awarded grants, while the Maryland Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education would be responsible for reviewing grant applications and selecting grant recipients. Sources for grant funding would include appropriations provided in the annual State budget and any federal funding awarded to MSDE that was identified and applied for with the assistance of MDE.

MDE supports the diversion of surplus food from disposal, including through a combination of waste prevention, food donation, and recycling (composting and anaerobic digestion). In 2020, an estimated 167,228 tons or 18 percent of food waste generated in Maryland was recycled, an estimated 112,167 tons of which were composted. Preventing, donating, and recycling surplus food can reduce greenhouse gas emissions, conserve existing disposal capacity, feed those in need, and create a valuable soil amendment that improves soil health. In particular, preventing food waste before it occurs is an important strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

MDE implements several initiatives to promote food waste reduction and composting practices in schools. MDE hosts a Waste-Free Lunch Challenge event at schools to encourage students to pack lunches in which everything can be either eaten, reused, or recycled. The Department also developed

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a toolkit for grade k-12 schools entitled “Food Waste Minimization and Related Activities, A Toolkit for Maryland Schools”, created to help schools reduce, donate, and recycle surplus food to avoid waste, feed those in need, and promote healthy soils. The toolkit contains information and resources to help administrators, educators, and staff plan curriculums and policies that will educate students and have them engage in environmentally sound approaches to daily living. The toolkit and additional information regarding how a school can incorporate food waste minimization and recycling practices can be viewed at:

mde.maryland.gov/programs/LAND/RecyclingandOperationsprogram/Pages/workandschool.aspx.

Thank you for your consideration. We will continue to monitor Senate Bill 124 during the Committee’s deliberations, and I am available to answer any questions you may have. Please feel free to contact me at 410-260-6301 or by e-mail at tyler.abbott@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tyler Abbott", with a long horizontal line extending to the left.

Tyler Abbott

cc: The Honorable Shelly Hettleman
Kaley Laleker, Director, Land and Materials Administration