



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**HB184**

**Environment - On-Farm Composting Facilities - Permit Exemption  
Testimony in SUPPORT**

Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein and members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 184, a bill which will increase the amount of area a farm may use to compost food scraps here in Maryland.

As the committee is aware, there are so many benefits to composting, including the reduction of both greenhouse gas emissions and our reliance on landfills and incinerators. According to the Environmental Integrity Project, in Maryland, emissions from landfills have the same planet-warming impact as driving 975,000 cars annually.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, according to the Environmental Protection Agency, **composting can cut methane emissions from decomposing food scraps by 95%.**<sup>2</sup>

Current law requires any farm which operates an on-farm composting site to apply for a variety of permits from the state, with limited exemptions. Years ago, under the directive of a workgroup of the General Assembly and MDE, limits were placed on the amount of square feet deemed acceptable for the composting of a variety of different products. For example, under the current exemptions, farms may use up to 40,000 square feet of land to compost manure without a permit, but may only use up to 5,000 square feet to compost food scraps.<sup>3</sup>

The purpose of HB184 is to bring parity to the composting limits, thereby expanding the ability of farms to partner with compost haulers to establish sites where both the farm and the community benefit. Currently, haulers such as the District 18-based Compost Crew take most of their residential and commercial compost from the region to the premier facility in Prince George's County. However, this is not without significant cost to the environment when there may be closer options available. The company currently partners with farms in Montgomery County's agricultural reserve to operate miniature composting outposts where they process 8 tons of residential compost per week under the current 5,000 square feet limit. The end-product is then provided to the farm on which the outpost is based. However, if

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<sup>1</sup> NPR, "Maryland Landfills Emit Four Times More Greenhouse Gases Than Reported:"  
<https://www.npr.org/local/305/2021/06/11/1005271937/maryland-landfills-emit-four-times-more-greenhouse-gases-tan-reported>

<sup>2</sup> NPR, "Maryland Landfills Emit Four Times More Greenhouse Gases Than Reported:"  
<https://www.npr.org/local/305/2021/06/11/1005271937/maryland-landfills-emit-four-times-more-greenhouse-gases-tan-reported>

<sup>3</sup> Maryland Division of State Documents, Title 26 - Department of the Environment:  
[http://www.dsd.state.md.us/comar/subtitle\\_chapters/26\\_Chapters.aspx](http://www.dsd.state.md.us/comar/subtitle_chapters/26_Chapters.aspx)

allowed to expand their operation even further, they could provide it to additional nearby farms or to customers who wish to use it for their own gardens.

**Thank you for the committee's consideration, and I respectfully request a favorable report on HB184.**