



Committee: Ways & Means

Testimony on: SB124 - Public Schools-Grant Program to Reduce and Compost School Waste

Organization: MLC Climate Justice Wing

Submitting: Diana Younts, Co-Chair

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: March 31, 2022

Dear M. Chair and Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing our testimony today in support of SB124. The MLC Climate Justice Wing, a statewide coalition of over 50 grassroots and professional organizations, urges you to vote favorably on SB124. In Maryland almost a million tons of food waste is generated each year with only 15.5% of these scraps being diverted and the remainder is sent to the landfill or incinerators where it produces greenhouse gas emissions, contributing to climate change.

This bill goes towards solving that problem, while at the same time educating our children about the value of diverting food waste, by creating a competitive grant program to support school-based initiatives to prevent, reduce, and compost pre- and post-consumer food waste.

Initiatives can include:

- Education for students, staff, parents
- School infrastructure improvements
- Training and education on food waste reduction and composting for staff
- Training and education on Offer-Versus-Serve (OVS) in cafeterias
- Developing innovative systems to maximize opportunities to serve food that has already been prepared such as during after school activities or as take-home meals
- Contracts with commercial composters
- Purchase of On-site composting bins
- Other innovative techniques for managing school-based food waste

Food Waste Diversion Feeds Hungry Children. The primary goals of these initiatives is to feed hungry students and reduce plate waste before the food becomes inedible. Allowing edible food to go to waste creates missed opportunities in the school food value chain. 1 in 7 children in Maryland face hunger. Diverting otherwise wasted food to these children could be

an essential source of nutrition.

Food Waste Suffocates in Landfills Creating Highly Potent Greenhouse Gas Emissions.

Food waste in landfills produces methane, a greenhouse gas that is 86 times more potent than carbon dioxide in its first 20 years of release to the atmosphere. In contrast, compost is a valuable soil amendment that enhances soil fertility, soil water-holding capacity, soil organic matter, and soil structure. In addition to farming and gardens, compost can be utilized for managing stormwater run-off and preventing soil erosion (for example, via rain gardens, green roofs, bioswales, compost filter socks, and other "green infrastructure" projects).

For these reasons, we recommend a FAVORABLE report in committee.