

To: Environment and Transportation Committee
From: Bioenergy Devco
Subject: Senate Bill 262, Environment - On-Farm Composting Facilities - Permit Exemption
Position: Unfavorable
Date: February 9, 2023

Bioenergy Devco opposes Senate Bill 262, Environment - On-Farm Composting Facilities - Permit Exemption.

This testimony is offered on behalf of Bioenergy Development Company (BDC), the foremost providers of anaerobic digester solutions and is a pioneer in this sector. The core expertise of our company lies in planning, producing and constructing the plants. For over 20 years and more than 250 biogas plants, our qualified team of engineers, biologists, chemists, agronomists, designers and marketing experts has significant experience in the design, construction and operation of anaerobic digester power plants and thus offers expertise in service, consultation and biological support.

This bill requires the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) to establish an exemption, by regulation, from the permitting requirements under the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 26.04.11.06 for an on-farm composting facility that (1) uses 40,000 square feet (ft²) of area or less in support of food scrap composting and (2) meets any other conditions specified in regulations.

BDC recognizes the need for added capacity for organics/food scrap recycling in the state; however, we also are very familiar with the impacts on air, water and soil if operations are not held to standards laid out in COMAR 26.04.11.06. By removing and/or reducing permitting/regulatory requirements for on farm composting this disrupts the flow of food scraps to other more thoroughly regulated organics recycling facilities and in absence of regulation may have a host of issues related to odor, vectors (rodents, insects etc.) leaching and emissions. Further, if a system fails, it would tarnish the reputation of local agriculture as well as organic recycling facilities.

The use of composting and anaerobic digestion processes can play a significant role in achieving goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and reducing the volume of material deposited in landfills; however, these practices should be expanded with consistent regulation to prevent negative impacts on surrounding communities and ensure the quality of resulting soil products.

For these reasons, Bioenergy Devco respectfully requests an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 262.

For additional information, please contact Aaron J. Greenfield at 410.446.1992