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March 29, 2023

Dear Chair Barve and Members of the Committee,

We are writing in strong support of **SB0262** on behalf of Waterkeepers Chesapeake, a coalition of seventeen Waterkeepers working to make the waters of the Chesapeake and Coastal Bays swimmable and fishable, and on behalf of our Fair Farms Initiative. Composting allows farmers and individuals to return nutrients from organic waste to crops in a manner that reduces the environmental impact of letting the crops degrade on their own. This brings environmental benefits through diverting food scraps from landfills and incinerators and reducing landfill methane emissions from organic material. **SB0262** goes hand-in-hand with Maryland's Zero Waste Plan, which promotes compost use and phasing in a food scrap disposal ban in commercial and institutional organizations.

This bill will expand the area for on-farm composting of food scraps from the current 5,000 square feet or less to 40,000 square feet or less without an MDE permit. The current limitation greatly limits farmers from being able to incorporate food scraps into their composting operations and offer their contribution to state-wide efforts to divert food waste from landfills. The permit process can prove to be too expensive or time-consuming, particularly for smaller farms. By expanding on this permit exemption, Maryland will take one step closer towards achieving its environmental goals and allow all our farmers to help make a difference.

For these reasons stated above, we urge the Committee to adopt a **FAVORABLE** report on **SB0262**.

Sincerely,

Waterkeepers Chesapeake and partnering farmers signed below:

Steve Kraszewski
Mason Farm Produce
Queen Anne, MD (Queen Anne's County)

Bill Mason
Mason's Heritage
Queen Anne, MD (Queen Anne's County)

Carin Celebuski
Ladybrook Farm
Monkton, MD (Baltimore County)

Devora Kimelman-Block
Black Dirt Rising Farm
Newburg, MD (Charles County)

Ibrafall (Bryan) Wright
Strength to Love 2 Farm
Baltimore, MD