



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB253
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 253. This bill enables farms to create on-farm composting sites for clean food scraps of up to 40,000 square feet, increasing the current limit from 5,000 square feet and bringing the amount of space available for composting of clean food scraps into parity with existing limits on the composting of manure. HB253 is identical to the version of this bill that passed the Senate unanimously last session, with many amendments that were adopted in response to stakeholder input.

The problem this bill aims to solve is to reduce a barrier in existing law that is limiting our farms from fully contributing to our efforts to divert food scraps from landfills. Currently in Maryland, more than 920,000 tons of food waste is generated each year. This food waste represents about half of the compostable material and a fifth of the total waste generated in our state¹. Unfortunately, almost 85% of Maryland's food scraps are incinerated or disposed of in a landfill.

Increasing our state's food diversion efforts is imperative. Due to the large quantity of the food waste generated, all existing composting facilities combined will be unable to handle all of the food waste needed for Maryland to safely meet its food waste diversion and climate goals.

You may hear from opponents who say that this legislation would grant an exemption for farms to increase composting without the necessary environmental protections that are required of commercial facilities. In response, we have included multiple changes that provide significant added protections, over and above existing requirements in the law and regulation. We have excluded the ability to compost animal carcasses from off-site, require intense record keeping, and are working with stakeholders on possible additional guardrails including limiting on-farm composting facilities from processing industrially produced animal byproducts.

HB 253 will not solve our food waste challenges by itself, but we know that it can make a difference. That's why I urge you to pass this common-sense legislation to allow our local farmers to be part of the solution.

Thank you for the committee's consideration, and I respectfully request a favorable report on HB253.

¹ MDE estimates that "food scraps comprise 54.1% of compostable material and 21.6% of the total waste generated"