

## **Favorable Testimony for On-Farm Composting Bill**

This bill -- House Bill 253/Senate Bill 262 -- would expand on-farm food scrap composting, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, sequester carbon in the soil, and provide farmers with a new income stream, healthy soils for growing, and reduced operating costs.

Under current regulations, farmers may use up to 40,000 square feet of space to compost food scraps generated on their farm but, once they accept food scraps from off-site grocery stores, cafeterias, or curbside collection programs, they are limited to just 5,000 square feet. The proposed legislation would double this size to 10,000 square feet for active food scrap composting.

In Maryland, only about 15% of all food waste is recycled through composting or other means. Most people throw food scraps in the trash, where it gets buried in landfills or burned in incinerators — both of which produce greenhouse gases. In incinerators, food and other organic waste are burned, creating carbon dioxide in the process. In landfills, food decomposes without oxygen, producing methane, a potent greenhouse gas.

The most efficient way to reduce these emissions is to divert food scraps from incineration and landfill waste streams by composting them. This bill will support increased composting by adding options where food scraps can be composted.

And this bill will help support independent agricultural operations through increased income streams and better-quality compost, and in turn, stronger crops. We need legislation to help farmers expand their composting abilities while also benefitting the environment and soil health and providing farmers with an income source.

I urge a favorable report on HB253/SB262.