



## PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY FARM BUREAU, INC.

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**To:** House Environment and Transportation Committee

**From:** Prince George's County Farm Bureau, Inc.

**Re:** House Bill 253 - On-Farm Composting Facilities - Permit Exemption

**Date:** February 8, 2023

On behalf of the Prince George's County Farm Bureau, I would like to express our support of House Bill 253, exempting on-farm composting facilities that meet certain criteria from Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) permitting.

Composting has long since been a practice of farmers, whether the input is animal manure, crop residue, food scraps, or a combination of these and other organic materials. However, many farmers who seek to expand composting in their operation are limited by the 5,000 square foot threshold that triggers a solid waste processing facility permit. Inclusion and expansion of materials and size for composting on a more economic scale provides opportunity for farmers to generate organic, locally sourced soil amendments, and participate in a resiliency plan to handle local food waste.

Technical service providers such as the University of Maryland Extension, and the local Soil Conservation Districts across the state offer guidance and standards for on-farm compost, and work closely with farmers to develop best management practices surrounding their on-farm composting operations. As Prince George's County and the State of Maryland continue to work towards setting standards for greener and more environmentally conscious practices, exempting on-farm compost up to 40,000 square feet offers new opportunities for partnership between farmers and local food waste operations. It also opens the door to beneficial uses implemented at a local level of food scraps that would otherwise be dumped into landfills.

Prince George's County Farm Bureau is in strong support of House Bill 253, and urges a favorable report. We look forward to working with our farmers to integrate this new opportunity into their farm operations and generate a greener food system in Maryland.

Sincerely,

Harrison B. Palmer

Vice President

Prince George's County Farm Bureau