

**TESTIMONY TO THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORTATION**

HB1139 – Solid Waste Disposal and Diversion and On-Farm Composting and Compost Use

Position: Support

March 8, 2023 Public Hearing

Brenda Platt, Director, Composting for Community Initiative, bplatt@ilsr.org
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Dear Chairman Barve, Vice Chair Stein, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Brenda Platt and I direct the Composting for Community Initiative at the Institute for Local Self-Reliance, a national nonprofit that has been advancing waste diversion in Maryland for many years.

The Institute for Local Self-Reliance urges a favorable report on HB1139 – Solid Waste Disposal and Diversion and On-Farm Composting and Compost Use. This bill would establish significant and needed funding for waste diversion projects including reduction, reuse, repair, composting, and recycling.

Maryland has made significant legislative progress in promoting recycling and composting. What is still lacking is funding for more programs and infrastructure, for everything from education and outreach to equipment for farmers.

We thank Delegate Regina T. Boyce for bringing this legislation forward to establish funds and grant programs to support a wide range of eligible projects throughout the state of Maryland.

Key reasons to support this bill include:

- Maryland’s recycling level has stagnated and landfills are approaching capacity.
- Maryland’s landfills are emitting four times more methane than previously estimated.
- More programs focused on waste prevention, reuse, repair, and composting are needed in Maryland. For instance, less than 18% of wasted food in Maryland is recycled,¹ and a major report found that policies on funding and incentives for food waste reduction and composting in Maryland are weak.²
- HB264, passed in the 2021 session, requires large food waste generators to divert their food waste if capacity exists. HB1139 now creates a tremendous opportunity to support farmers in creating some of that needed capacity and in using compost produced in the state. An influx of diverted food waste will require expanded processing capacity at all levels (including community-scale and farm composters).

¹ Source: Maryland Dept. of the Environment website, [“Solid Waste Management - Organics Recycling and Waste Diversion - Food Residuals”](#): in 2020, 167,000 tons of food waste were recycled, while 774,000 tons were landfilled or incinerated.

² Source: Natural Resources Defense Council, [Maryland Food Waste Policy Gap Analysis and Inventory](#). October 2021 (p. 13).

- We have heard first-hand testimony from other states (including Ohio, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Wisconsin, Indiana, Minnesota, North Carolina and Iowa) who have a similar disposal surcharge to waste diversion mechanism in place. These states have shared that their programs have had positive impacts on their local communities, economies, and the environment. Wisconsin's \$7 per ton recycling fee, for instance, generates \$37 million to \$40 million per year in funding. In 2021, Iowa created \$8 million in grant funding based on its surcharge applied to 3.9 million tons of waste. In North Carolina, during the peak of its program, the State provided funding for 35 to 80 public and private projects per year. Even states such as Indiana with a small per ton fee have had tremendous impact. In 2020, its \$1.8 million in grant funding created 47 new jobs and diverted 85,000 tons in new material from disposal. (See presentations from five of these state agencies on our February 2022 webinar, [Funding Recycling Infrastructure via Disposal Surcharges](#).) Why not Maryland too?
- The grant programs will help Maryland businesses develop and expand their waste diversion efforts. It will also provide direct funding to counties to fund a wide range of projects from waste prevention to repair, composting, and countering illegal dumping.
- The proposed grant programs have a built-in funding mechanism. This is not an unfunded mandate on the state.
- This bill complements HB 1089 – Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program, which would establish a deposit on beverage containers in the state.
- Expanding waste prevention, reuse, repair, recycling, and composting brings myriad benefits and co-benefits to Maryland: jobs, Bay protection, cleaner air and water, climate protection (see, for example, the attached infographic: [How Composting Combats the Climate Crisis](#)).

Further, since the bill's first introduction in the 2022 session, we have met with numerous stakeholders to address their concerns and/or suggestions to improve this bill, including the MD Farm Bureau, Maryland Association of Counties (MACO), and Prince George's County Dept. of Environment. As a result of this feedback, the major changes this year's bill includes are:

- Dropping the per-ton surcharge from \$5/ton to \$2/ton
- Adjusting the percentage distribution of revenue via grants so that Counties receive 50%, on-farm compost and compost use gets 25% and the final 25% is allotted to competitive waste reduction grants throughout the state (see the pie chart in the attached factsheet),
- A new opt-out option for Counties, which would like to instead set up their own surcharge-to-grants program. This gives Counties more flexibility and control over the program should they choose to invest the resources into running it themselves instead of participating in the statewide program. Opted-out Counties would not be eligible for Waste Reduction or On-Farm Composting grants from the statewide fund.

Sincerely,



Brenda Platt

Director, Composting for Community Project, Institute for Local Self Reliance

Attachments: (1) Fact Sheet on HB1139, (2) FAQs on HB1139, and (3) Infographic on climate benefits