



## **SB262 Environment - On-Farm Composting Facilities - Permit Exemption**

**Testimony before  
House Environment and Transportation Committee  
March 29, 2023  
Position: Favorable**

Mr. Chair, Mr. Vice Chair, and members of the Committee, my name is Peter Alexander, and I represent the 750+ members of Indivisible Howard County. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members). **We are writing in support of SB262, On-Farm Composting Facilities – Permit Exemptions.** We are grateful for the leadership of Senators Gallion, Hester, and Carroza for sponsoring this bill.

This bill would expand on-farm food scrap composting which will then help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and sequester carbon in the soil. In doing so, it will provide farmers with a new income stream, healthy soils, 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 food scraps get 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.

Composting offers numerous benefits to farmers. Farms can be paid to take in food scraps from nearby businesses or partner with one of the emerging small companies that collect food scraps from residences and restaurants. Once scraps are composted, the product can substitute for synthetic fertilizers, which are both increasingly expensive and harmful to the environment.

SB262 represents a positive step forward for Maryland's farmers and for our environment.

**We respectfully urge a favorable committee report.**

Peter Alexander, PhD  
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