

**TESTIMONY TO THE MARYLAND HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND
TRANSPORTATION**

HB0847 – Anaerobic Digestion Workgroup

Position: Unfavorable

March 1, 2023 Public Hearing

Sophia Jones, Policy Associate, Composting for Community Initiative, sjones@ilsr.org

Institute for Local Self-Reliance 1200 18th Street, NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20036

Dear Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Sophia Jones and I am submitting testimony on behalf of the Institute for Local Self-Reliance, a national nonprofit that has been working to advance infrastructure for organic materials processing in Maryland for many years.

We served on the Yard Waste, Food Residuals, and Other Organic Materials Diversion and Infrastructure Study Group from 2018 to 2019 and we are honored to be named as one of the members of the Workgroup. **Unfortunately, the Institute for Local Self-Reliance is opposing HB 0847 – Anaerobic Digestion Workgroup for the following reasons.**

Firstly, we are not in favor of study and work groups in general because they delay implementation of needed policy and they generally come up with skewed reports and recommendations that reflect the vested interests at the table. Minority viewpoints are limited and seldom seriously considered in the outputs and outcomes of such endeavors. Participation in these conversations is often exhausting and fruitless for representatives of minority viewpoints.

Second, a minor point to add is that the Institute for Local Self-Reliance was not consulted before being explicitly named as a member of this Workgroup. Though we do consider it important for us to serve in order to balance the vested interests at the table, there are also other groups that could be represented to balance the Workgroup, for example, Future Harvest/Chesapeake Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture.

Third, we question the impetus for the bill and the narrow focus on anaerobic digestion, as if it's the sole technology or system to handle the state's organic materials. The Workgroup's work mandate is too severely limited.

To be clear, we are supporters of anaerobic digestion as an organics management option. We are primarily concerned about the likelihood of producing contaminated products, an issue more commonly prevalent in centralized facilities (including anaerobic digesters) that accept

contaminated feedstocks and that are coupled with depackagers. When it comes to quality soil amendments, bigger is definitely not better. PFAs as well as physical and other chemical contamination should be a primary issue area addressed by a Workgroup focused on organics processing infrastructure. This is especially critical given the rising concern of PFAs in biosolids and the serious potential impact on farmlands.

To be more effective and balanced, the Workgroup would need a much wider scope, such as addressing markets for soil amendments of all types. We believe that the former Yard Waste, Food Residuals, and Other Organic Materials Diversion and Infrastructure Study Group already studied organics management options, including anaerobic digestion. We don't need to reinvent the wheel, especially one that wasn't particularly fruitful after two years. Many of that Study Group's recommendations have yet to be addressed.

As written, this bill includes a narrow representation of interests in this field and could result in the facilitation of one company (Bioenergy Devco) gaining almost monopoly control of the market, shutting out farmers and other appropriate organics management technologies and systems. We must pose the question – why would the State spend its resources focusing on building markets for just one industry and, essentially, one company?

We believe that, to be successful in making infrastructure recommendations for organic materials management, this bill would have to be completely rewritten to change the Workgroup's work mandate and composition. For these reasons, we must, sadly, oppose this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sophia Jones', written in a cursive style.

Sophia Jones
Policy Associate, Composting for Community Initiative
Institute for Local Self Reliance