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The Maryland House of Delegates
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**Delegate Stein Testimony in Support of
HB 586 - State Procurement - Purchasing Preferences –
Compost, Mulch, and Soil Amendments**

Chairwoman Pena-Melnyk and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee:

This bill is a natural progression of prior years' legislation that encourages recycling by Maryland State agencies, particularly in their procurement policies. As a bit of history:

In 2010, the Maryland Green Maryland Act, created the Maryland Green Purchasing Committee (GPC) to develop recommendations and report annually to the General Assembly regarding establishing an environmentally preferable purchasing (EPP) program for state agencies.

In 2014, HB 629 - Environmentally Preferable Procurement – Maryland Green Purchasing Committee took GPC's recommendations and required each State agency to adopt EPP specifications. The bill also redefined EPP so the benefits of such products or services were based on (1) their full lifecycles; (2) relevant international consensus standards; and (3) other relevant factors including recycling, energy recovery, climate change, fossil fuel, and ozone depletion.

That same year, HB 878 SHA- Compost and Compost-based Products-Specifications required the State Highway Administration (SHA) to use compost and compost-based products in highway construction and post-construction stormwater management projects as a pollution mitigation strategy. SHA was also required to issue an annual report on the use of compost in its projects and to make recommendations to maximize the use of compost in construction products.

The most recent SHA report recommended an evaluation of new products to add to its Qualified Products List. This bill, based on those recommendations, will require all State agencies that purchase compost, mulch, or other soil amendments to give preference to products produced from municipal solid waste, food waste, sludge, yard waste, clean food waste, or other organic materials. And, as amended in the Senate it will also include aggregate among the list of purchased organic matter.

One major factor limiting the ability of state agencies to use EPP standards in their procurement policies has been the emphasis on keeping the cost of materials as low as possible. The process of collecting, processing, and delivering recycled construction materials is often more costly than using virgin material resources. But, while cost saving is an important consideration in state procurement programs, it is important to also consider the long-term environmental and health benefits of using recycled, and sustainable, materials—which is the whole point of utilizing EPP by state agencies.

This bill, therefore, would give agencies greater flexibility in purchasing recycled organic products that are not more than 15% above the price of a comparable product manufactured from virgin materials, when the Green Purchasing Committee determines that use of that product is in the best interest of the State.

As more innovative uses of recycled materials come to the market, it has never been more important that the State plays its part in incentivizing widespread adoption of recycled organic products, growing this market, and making sustainable approaches to infrastructure and construction more accessible moving forward

I urge you to support this legislation.