

DELEGATE MARY A. LEHMAN
Legislative District 21
Prince George's and
Anne Arundel Counties

Environment and Transportation
Committee



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 163
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
301-858-3114 · 410-841-3114
800-492-7122 Ext. 3114
Mary.Lehman@house.state.md.us

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

House Bill 173
State Lands Collection of Yard Waste
February 7, 2024
Support

Mr. Chairman, Vice Chair, and esteemed colleagues:

I am asking for your favorable report for HB 173, a bill that prohibits both state employees and contractors from using single-use plastic containers for yard waste when working on state lands and along state highways. Instead of single-use plastic bags, the bill requires that state employees and contractors to either use a compostable container, such as a brown paper yard waste bag, or a container that will not be discarded with the yard waste (e.g., a container that can be reused).

Under current Maryland law, there are no restrictions on the employment of single-use plastic containers for yard waste collection on the grounds of state buildings and along state highways.

The house bill ensures that yard waste collected on state lands and along state highways is disposed of in a more environmentally conscious manner. When single-use plastic bags are used, the collected yard waste, along with the plastic bag, frequently end up in landfills. According to the World Wildlife Fund, the bags then take up to twenty years to break down.¹ If the employee or contractor chooses to compost the yard waste, the plastic bag is often shredded at the composting facility along with the yard waste. Disintegrating plastic forces the composting facility to either invest in imperfect plastic-screening technology, which adds both time and cost to an already slow and expensive process, or to simply produce a contaminated product.

To date, over one third of Maryland's counties have enacted similar policies for residential yard waste pickup. It is time for the state to hold its employees and contractors to the same standard.

Thank you and I urge a favorable report.

¹World Wildlife Fund, "The Lifecycle of Plastics," July 1, 2021

