



**The Maryland Department of the Environment
Secretary Serena McIlwain**

***House Bill 173
State Buildings and State Highways - Collection of Yard Waste***

Position: Support with Amendments
Committee: Environment and Transportation Committee
Date: February 5, 2024
From: Jeremy D. Baker

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) **SUPPORTS** HB 173 **WITH AMENDMENTS**.

Bill Summary

The bill would prohibit a person from disposing of yard waste collected on the grounds of a State building or State highway in a single-use plastic container. Additionally, it would require a person to collect yard waste on the grounds of a State building or State highway in a container that 1) will not be discarded with the yard waste; or 2) is compostable.

Position Rationale

Requiring that yard waste be collected in a container that will not be discarded with the yard waste or is compostable will save organic recyclers time and money because they will not have to debag the waste, lowering their costs. Lowered costs could be transferred to their customers making organics recycling that much more appealing. MDE anticipates that this will help promote the additional diversion of yard waste, which is already extremely high. MDE hopes that the state's leadership in this area will also encourage counties and municipalities to adopt similar policies, as it is a low effort, high impact countermeasure.

The majority of State agencies responsible for managing State property, including the Department of General Services and the State Highway Administration, currently use compostable containers or alternative methods when collecting yard waste. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) also minimizes the use of plastic containers when collecting yard waste, with one narrow exception. DNR uses plastic containers when eradicating invasive species, and plans to submit an amendment exempting that particular practice from the prohibition in this bill. Because controlling and mitigating the spread of invasive species is crucial to environmental stewardship, MDE concurs with DNR's proposed amendment.

Accordingly, MDE urges a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report for HB 173.

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