

February 7, 2025

**To:** Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

**Subject: SB134:** Solid Waste Disposal Surcharge and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Fund and Grant Programs

Position: **Favorable**

I am writing in support of SB134, which will establish needed funds and grant programs to reduce, rescue, and divert wasted food from disposal in Maryland.

Maryland has good and significant policies supporting food waste recovery, organics recycling, composting, and healthy soils. However, funding for implementation and support remains a crucial obstacle to progress. This bill invests in capacity and infrastructure, establishing funding that addresses the budget deficit while protecting taxpayers from future disposal costs that are likely to increase over time.

SB134 will provide more than \$14 million per year for development of infrastructure, programs, and education for wasted food diversion in Maryland. This legislation establishes a nominal \$2/ton surcharge on final waste disposal to provide needed funding for the above-named efforts.

Maryland's stagnant recycling rate, high landfill emissions, shrinking landfill capacity, and increasing demand for alternatives to food waste disposal indicate the need for widespread investment into wasted food reduction and diversion.

As an active volunteer with local zero waste and food scrap recovery efforts, I can personally testify to the need for this legislation, and to the difficulty of establishing the needed infrastructure that this bill addresses.

The funding will prioritize projects that directly benefit local communities, especially underserved communities, and that produce high-quality soil amendments to support Maryland soil and water health. Counties will receive reliable annual funding to support and expand wasted food prevention and diversion programs, infrastructure, and education, including staffing costs.

These provisions support a collaborative approach to achieving better food and organics management throughout the state, with development via many avenues. This legislation is a win for Maryland taxpayers, for the state budget, for climate resiliency, and for food waste reduction across the state.

I urge a favorable vote on SB134.

Sincerely,

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