

SB 134

Solid Waste Disposal Surcharge and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Fund and Grant Programs – Established Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee February 11, 2025

SUPPORT

Senate Bill 134 aims to reduce food waste by creating three new grant programs that would fund infrastructure, projects, education, composting, food rescue, and other food waste reduction programs through a \$2/ton surcharge on final waste disposal in landfills and incinerators.

The Maryland Food Bank estimates that 1 in 3 Marylanders are at risk of food insecurity. A person who is food insecure does not have consistent access to healthy and nutritious food on any given day, and this problem persists in every area of the state.

The Maryland Food Bank understands the importance – and challenges – of reducing and minimizing wasted food. We are an integral part of the local food system as the statewide food assistance safety net organization, last year providing food to over 1 million Marylanders. In order to carry out this critical work, we rely in part on donations of food. These donations come from a myriad of sources, including partnerships we organize with local grocery, wholesale, and retail organizations, as well as farms located around the state. Specifically, the Food Bank facilitates a Retail Recovery program that connects grocery stores and wholesalers to local food pantries and partners with farms who donate produce and allow staff and volunteers to glean extra crops. In FY 24, we ramped up our Retail Recovery program by 35%, rescuing 3 million pounds of food. We believe these are critical efforts to re-distribute food before it becomes wasted.

This work requires adequate resources and the partnership of the entire food system working together. SB 134 helps make that more realistic and achievable by providing resources to non-profit organizations and small businesses, local governments and communities, and our friends in agriculture. By involving the entire food supply chain, Maryland has the opportunity to not only combat wasted food productively and responsibly, but also to strengthen necessary infrastructure, increase education and awareness, and achieve environmental goals. Legislation like SB 134 is critical in transforming our food system into one that wastes no edible food, strengthens the capacity of organizations and businesses necessary in the food supply chain, and increases the food security of entire communities.

The Maryland Food Bank appreciates your consideration and respectfully requests a favorable report on SB 134.