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*Legislative District 21*

Prince George's and  
Anne Arundel Counties

Environment and Transportation  
Committee



The Maryland House of Delegates

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## THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

### HB 338

### State Lands Collection of Yard Waste

March 25, 2025

### Support

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Esteemed Members of the Committee:

I am asking for your favorable report for HB 338, a bill that prohibits both state employees and contractors from using single-use plastic bags for yard waste when working on state lands and along state highways. The House passed this bill in both 2024 and 2025. It was not voted on last year by the Senate Education, Energy and Education Committee.

This year's bill also requires the yard waste, whether bagged or unbagged, to be disposed of at an organics recycling or a natural wood recycling facility. The Department of Environment has confirmed that these facilities have capacity for the disposal of this waste. The House Environment and Transportation Committee amended the bill to make an exemption when there is no organics recycling or natural wood recycling facility within thirty miles of where the yard waste is collected.

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 reusable container. 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.

Another change to this year's bill provides an exemption for the use of plastic bags for the removal of noxious weeds and invasive species. The Department of Natural Resources sometimes uses black plastic bags to kill these plants, once they have been removed.

HB 338 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 ends up in landfill. According to the World Wildlife Fund, the bags then take up to twenty years to break down.<sup>1</sup> If it goes to a composting facility, the plastic bags are often shredded along with the yard waste. The issue of the disintegrating plastic forces the composting facilities 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 operate under the same standards.

Thank you and I urge a favorable report.

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<sup>1</sup> World Wildlife Fund, "The Lifecycle of Plastics," July 1, 2021