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**SB134**

February 11, 2025

**TO:** Members of the Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee  
Members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

**FROM:** Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations

**RE:** Senate Bill 134- Solid Waste Disposal Surcharge and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Fund and Grant Programs - Established

**POSITION: Support**

Chairs Feldman and Guzzone, Vice Chairs Kagan and Rosapepe, and Members of the Committees, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** Senate Bill (SB) 134.

SB 134 supports wasted food diversion goals across the state of Maryland and priorities to reduce wasted food outlined in Baltimore City's [2018 Food Waste & Recovery Strategy](#). The "On-Farm Organics Diversion and Recycling Grant Program" established under SB 134 would fund various strategies to prevent, reduce and divert organic waste, potentially supporting the long-term goals of HB 264 – Organics Recycling - Food Residuals, which passed the Maryland General Assembly in 2021. Surcharges of \$2/ton from waste disposal facilities would support the grant program. SB 134 both addresses funding shortfalls for organic waste diversion activities by creating a new revenue source to divert organic waste.

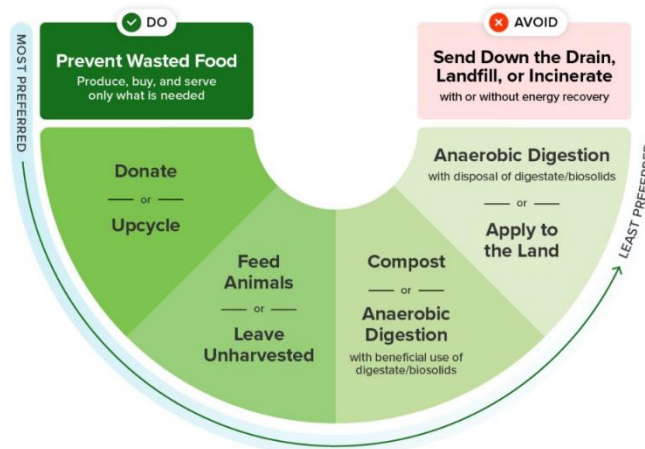
Wasted food contributes significantly to municipal solid waste cost which local governments are responsible for managing. An estimated 25% of residential waste in Baltimore City is food and roughly a third of waste is compostable, based on a 2019 waste sort. In the U.S., 40% of all food produced is wasted. For Maryland and the City of Baltimore, this means an exorbitant amount of food is sent to landfills, burned in waste incinerators opposed to feeding people, feeding animals or recirculating nutrients back into the local ecosystem (through composting).

The US Environmental Protection Agency has recognized food waste as a national, solvable problem with the release of its Food Waste Scale in 2023 which prioritizes prevention, redistribution and feeding animals as key strategies.



## Wasted Food Scale

How to reduce the environmental impacts of wasted food



October 2023

Landfilling and burning food residuals are the least desired destinations for our food resources, according to the Food Waste Scale, yet in the U.S. the majority of food is disposed in this manner. Maryland has made tremendous progress to reduce food waste, but funding mechanisms to support these goals have been sparse, at best. Applying a \$2/ton surcharge on waste disposal facilities accomplishes 2 goals. First, the surcharge provides an incentive to reduce the amount of waste dumped at landfills and incinerators across the state, prompting a key change in waste behaviors. Second, the bill invests revenue from the surcharge into much needed food waste reduction infrastructure.

Per the bill language, fundable activities will be divided into three buckets 1) a Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Program; 2) an On-Farm Organics Diversion and Recycling Grant Program and 3) County Wasted Food Reduction Block Grants. Grants may support farmers, colleges/universities, non-profit organizations or businesses with resources to prevent food from being wasted, redistribute uneaten/unwanted food, feed animals, compost or recycle wasted food and fund various education, training or research goals.

Baltimore stands to benefit directly from the proposed block grants, designated for units of local government, institutions of higher education, non-profits, farmers, businesses, or some combination of these entities. Block grants under this legislation are intended to fund *'infrastructure, collection...education or technical assistance...'* programs across Maryland. Baltimore City may fund a range of food waste reduction needs with these funds including cold storage for produce, efforts to animals, composting infrastructure, education/technical assistance, the adoption of reusable food service ware and dishwashers, food scrap collection programs or staffing needs. In the city's 2018 Food Waste and Recovery Strategy, we commit to a 50% reduction in commercial food waste, eliminating all food waste from colleges and universities by, an 80% reduction in household food waste and a 90% diversion rate in k-12 schools by 2040. SB 134 makes these goals possible, and provides the much-needed funding to build critical food waste infrastructure.

For these reasons, the BCA respectfully request a **favorable** report on SB 134.