



**Testimony in SUPPORT of SB134
Solid Waste Disposal Surcharge and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Fund and Grant
Programs - Established**

Senate - Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

Jose Coronado-Flores , On Behalf of CASA

February 11, 2025

Dear Honorable Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

CASA is pleased to offer **favorable testimony in support of SB134**, because it is important legislation that will address the burden and quantity of food waste and solid waste. CASA is the largest immigrant services and advocacy organization in Maryland, and in the Mid-Atlantic region, with a membership of over 60,000 Black and Latino immigrants and working families in Maryland. We would like to thank Senator Hester for her leadership on this bill.

In our transition to an emissionless and sustainable state, it is critical to offer concrete solutions to reduce the amount of waste that ends up in landfills and trash incinerators. The working-class immigrant community that comprises our membership acknowledges the intertwined relationship between food and solid waste, emissions caused by the burning or landfilling of this waste, the associated emissions that result from transporting this waste, and the local burden of pollution in our communities in being in proximity to landfills across the state and the Baltimore Wheelabrator waste incinerator.

I want to highlight the Food Waste Reduction and Diversion Grants Program that this bill establishes. These grants are to be procured by a variety of entities with the goal of funding projects that aim to reduce food waste through community projects and education. The immigrant community, especially individuals who are coming from sustainable rural communities like my family who comes from a small farming community in Guatemala, wants to bring and engage in our best practices of zero-waste and composting here in our new communities.

We envision communities that compost their food waste and utilize the produced fertilizer for community gardens where carriers of sustainability wisdom lead and execute these projects. Furthermore, these grant programs also promote edible food waste diversion. According to the MD Food Bank, 1/3 Marylanders are food insecure, yet MDE reports that much of the over 1 million tons of food waste produced in 2021 could have been eaten. Food is a gift that some people struggle to obtain, yet many of us carelessly waste it. For these reasons, CASA urges a favorable report.

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