

**Committee:** Education, Energy, and the Environment

**Testimony on:** SB 134: “Solid Waste Disposal Surcharge and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Fund and Grant Programs – Established”

**Position:** Support

**Hearing Date:** February 11, 2025

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club urges the Committee to support SB134. The bill would create a Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Fund to finance three grant programs aimed at increasing waste diversion, recycling, and composting infrastructure, financed by a \$2 per ton surcharge on waste disposal.

Reducing waste and its disposal in landfills and incinerators is a key strategy for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and fighting climate change. However, success at diverting waste depends critically on having in place the infrastructure for expanded composting and recycling. It requires investments in infrastructure by local governments, farmers, businesses, schools, nonprofits, and other local entities. SB134 would generate the resources for these needed investments, while encouraging waste reduction.

Solid waste surcharges ranging from 50 cents per ton to \$13 per ton at landfills, incinerators, and transfer stations have been funding recycling and waste reduction programs in Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin, as well as in local jurisdictions, since as early as the 1980s. These investments pay for themselves by reducing the amount of waste disposed. In Maryland, the grants could total more than \$14 million per year to support local governments, small businesses, non-profits, schools, farmers, and others in their efforts to advance wasted food prevention, rescue, recycling, and composting projects and infrastructure.

Earlier versions of this bill were introduced in the 2022, 2023, and 2024 General Assembly sessions. The current bill incorporates changes based on discussions with the Maryland Department of Environment and the Department of Agriculture to ensure that the bill fills programmatic gaps and is implementable by the agencies.

Waste diversion investments are critical, and a waste disposal surcharge has proven to be a highly effective way of funding them across the country. The Sierra Club respectfully requests a favorable report on SB134.

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