



Green Grove
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Written Testimony in Support of SB0134: Solid Waste Disposal Surcharge and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Fund and Grant Programs - Established

Submitted by Phu Tran, Yara Aziz, Fatou Savage, Kashvi Mehta, Addysen Whitfield, Erin Park, Green Grove

Maryland Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee February 11, 2025

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee,

We are high school students in Maryland and representatives of Green Grove, a youth-led organization dedicated to bridging the food accessibility gap and educating students about sustainable practices. Our mission is to empower the next generation with the knowledge and resources necessary to address food insecurity and environmental sustainability through advocacy, education, and direct action. We are writing to strongly urge a **favorable** vote on **SB0134**, a bill that will directly benefit students like us, as well as schools and communities across the state.

The Need for SB134 in Schools and Student Communities

As students, we have seen firsthand the staggering amount of food waste that occurs daily in school cafeterias. Despite efforts to provide meals for all students, a large portion of uneaten food is discarded instead of being recovered for redistribution or composted for environmental benefit. The implementation of **food recovery and composting programs through SB0134 would directly impact students in the following ways:**

1. **Reallocating School Funds for Student Enrichment** Currently, schools across Maryland spend significant amounts on waste disposal services, including tipping fees at landfills and waste collection contracts. Worcester County, for example, charges \$80 per ton in landfill tipping fees, while Baltimore County charges \$125 per ton for excess waste disposal. These costs add up and divert funding from critical student programs. By reducing food waste through recovery initiatives, schools can **save thousands of dollars annually**, allowing these funds to be redirected toward extracurricular activities, sports programs, and educational resources that benefit students directly.
2. **Reducing Unnecessary Food Purchases** Schools frequently purchase additional food while simultaneously throwing away untouched, perfectly edible meals. Rather than continuously increasing food budgets, **this bill would encourage the preservation and redistribution of surplus food**, ensuring that students in need receive meals while reducing overall food procurement costs. This allows money to be spent on improving school facilities, increasing access to mental health resources, and expanding educational opportunities.

3. **Addressing the Glaring Gap Between Compostable Materials and Composting Programs**
Schools like Reservoir High School already use compostable lunch trays, yet many lack the infrastructure to **compost** these materials. This creates a **major financial inefficiency**, as we are paying for compostable materials without reaping their environmental benefits. SB0134 would help ensure that composting systems are properly established, making our schools more environmentally responsible while aligning our spending with sustainable waste management practices.
4. **Empowering Students to Lead Environmental Change** SB0134 would provide Maryland youth with **hands-on experience in food waste reduction, environmental stewardship, and sustainability practices**. Through food rescue initiatives and composting programs, students gain valuable life skills, leadership opportunities, and exposure to real-world applications of sustainability science. This bill would equip the next generation with the tools to combat food waste not just in schools, but in their communities and future careers.
5. **Tackling Food Waste at Its Root – A Perspective from Our Nonprofit’s Work** Through our work with farms, restaurants, and food banks, we have witnessed how the lack of structured food rescue and composting programs exacerbates food waste and food insecurity. Many local food producers are forced to discard excess food due to logistical and financial barriers that could be addressed through this bill’s grant program. Implementing **SB134 would create a system that not only prevents unnecessary waste but ensures that surplus food reaches those who need it most.**

In conclusion, SB0134 is an essential step toward a **smarter, more sustainable approach to food waste management in Maryland’s schools and communities**. It would lead to **better financial decision-making, increased student opportunities, and a stronger commitment to environmental sustainability**. As students who will see the direct impacts of this legislation, we respectfully urge the committee to **vote favorable on SB0134** to support a future where Maryland's youth can thrive in a more resourceful and responsible school system.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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