

MARYLAND RETAILERS ALLIANCE

The Voice of Retailing in Maryland



SB134 Solid Waste Disposal Surcharge and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Fund and Grant Programs - Established Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee February 11th, 2025

Position: Favorable with Amendments

Background: SB134 would establish a grant program to fund projects that aim to reduce food waste in Maryland, and would establish a surcharge for a certain amount of solid waste.

Comments: The Maryland Retailers Alliance supports the establishment of a grant program to incentivize and support programs to reduce food waste in Maryland. Efforts to reduce food waste often lead to symbiotic relationships between food retailers and entities like food banks and local farms. Many of our members have engaged in contracts and relationships with farms and charitable organizations to divert unsold food products for many years, even before recent State laws drew more attention to the issue. The establishment of a grant award to further incentivize food waste diversion will benefit a variety of industries in Maryland and assist in efforts to find new uses for unsold products within the food retail industry.

Regarding other portions of the bill, MRA has concerns related to the impact of establishing a surcharge fee per tonnage of solid waste. The proposed surcharge fee extends beyond the issue of food waste and would appear to impact all sources of solid waste in the state. Given the current existing mandates regarding food waste reduction and the variety of other proposals designed to encourage and increase recycling in the state, we believe that the proposed fee would be punitive. Some categories of waste cannot be avoided, whether through intentional diversion at the business level or through increased recycling. The proposed surcharge would impact both businesses and consumers in Maryland at a time when costs are increasing across the board, and we would respectfully recommend that the Committee consider removing the related language.

Thank you for your consideration.