



"Cultivating a collaborative, sustainable, and equitable food system for all Maryland communities."

January 27, 2025

2025 SESSION SUPPORT TESTIMONY

HB 42: Solid Waste Disposal Surcharge and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Fund and Grant Programs – Established

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COMMITTEE: Environment and Transportation

POSITION: Testimony in Support of House Bill 42

Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement for the record **in support of House Bill 42.**

This letter is submitted on behalf of the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council. The Food System Resiliency Council was established by the Maryland General Assembly during the 2021 legislative session to bring together 32 appointed council members from across the state, all with different points of entry and expertise, to work toward a more resilient food system and address the food insecurity crisis.

One of the key mandates of this Council is to develop equity and sustainability policy recommendations to increase the long-term resiliency of Maryland's food system. A key recommendation of the November [2024 Food System Resiliency Council Report](#) to the Maryland Legislature (Recommendation #2.2) was increasing the capacity for diverted organic materials through establishing grant and program funds using a waste disposal surcharge. This surcharge aligns with established programs in neighboring states and would help reduce waste and increase rescuing and recycling of food in the State. Currently, the State has minimal facilities for food diversion to increase food security or recycle non-recoverable food resources. Increasing food diversion, providing education on food waste reduction, and developing organic recycling infrastructure will increase our food system resiliency and build on emerging practices in the State. It is important that legislation is passed that addresses problems throughout the state, with resources allocated to organic diversion, composting, food rescue, education, source separation, upcycling, and exploring linkage between food waste and hunger.

A first step in increased food resiliency can be achieved by **passing HB 42**, which will not require state baseline funding but will establish grant funds to provide infrastructure, programming, and educational resources for on-farm food waste composting as well as increasing food rescue efforts. The passing of HB 42 would create the Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Fund and the County



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Wasted Food Reduction Block Grant Program. Awarded grants from these programs will increase infrastructure, programs, and education that reduce, rescue, and divert wasted food in the State and within counties.

Over one-third of the food produced in the United States is never eaten, wasting the calories and production resources used to grow food that could have fed more than 150 million people each year. The wasted food comprises 1/4 of our landfill content. USEPA stated that reducing 50% of the food waste going to US landfills would be the equivalent of eliminating the greenhouse gas emissions from 21 coal-fired power plants or 15 million homes' annual energy use.

Passing HB 42 will benefit Maryland's Food System, create resources for important food system resiliency initiatives throughout the supply chain, and increase our circular bioeconomy. Each year, 119 billion lbs. of food are wasted in the US, equivalent to 1 lb./person/day or 130 billion meals at an economic value of \$408 billion per year. With 13.5 million US households being food-insecure at some time, there is a need to reduce this food waste impact. Based on the latest United for ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) data, one in three Marylanders (2 million people) are at risk of becoming food insecure. The HB 42 legislation will create the funds needed to execute important initiatives and help increase food resiliency and reduce food insecurity by funding important food infrastructure and education efforts.

Nationwide, 29 states have additional surcharges for solid waste, with over 1/3 of these states having a surcharge between \$1-\$2. The \$2 per ton fee proposed in Maryland is less than the disposal fees of our two neighboring states. West Virginia has a \$2.75 surcharge per ton of solid waste. Pennsylvania has a \$6.25 per ton surcharge spread across three initiatives. Pennsylvania's Growing Greener Grants has a \$4 per ton charge funding the Growing Greener Grants Program established in 1999, a \$0.25 per ton charge funding an Environmental Stewardship Fund (ESF) established in 2002, and a \$2 per ton charge for waste disposal at landfills and resource recovery facilities established in 1988 to finance the Recycling Fund to award municipal grants for recycling collection, education, processing facilities, and equipment.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our support of HB 42 and create opportunities for increased food security in the state of Maryland using a model that has been established and well-received in our neighboring states.

Sincerely,

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