

Good afternoon, Chair and members of the committee. My name is Tanvi Modugula, and I'm a junior at Mount Hebron High School. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today in support of this bill.

A few years ago, I helped start a composting program at my school, and the results were eye-opening. In just four months, our pilot program diverted 7,000 pounds of food waste from landfills—that's the equivalent of offsetting 314 gallons of gasoline. But getting there wasn't easy. We struggled to secure funding for training, infrastructure, and educational materials. The only reason we were able to launch the program was because of a small, temporary grant.

That experience showed me how much schools can do to fight food waste—but also how much more support we need to make these efforts sustainable. Reliable funding, like what this bill provides, would allow schools to start and grow programs without the constant fear of running out of resources.

This bill isn't just about reducing waste. It's about education, empowerment, and community. Our composting program inspired younger students to get involved, brought families together, and showed that small changes can lead to big impacts. Imagine the difference we could make if more schools had the opportunity to implement these programs.

If we don't act now, schools could lose momentum and miss the chance to build on the progress we've worked so hard to achieve. With this bill, we can ensure composting and food waste diversion become the norm in Maryland schools.

Thank you for your time and consideration.