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Position: FAV



March 24, 2026

To: Maryland Senate Education, Energy & the Environment Committee
Re: HB164 State Buildings & State Highways – Collection and Disposal of Yard Waste Support

Maryland Recycling Network members are public and private sectors recyclers and recycling advocates. Our members are county and municipal government recycling managers, private sector recyclers, non-profit recyclers and citizens who support recycling. We have direct experience operating recycling and composting programs at the county and municipal government level. We know the ins and outs of recycling in Maryland. Our experience informs our comments.

We promote sustainable reduction, reuse and recycling (the 3 "R's") of materials otherwise destined for disposal and the purchase of products made with recycled material content. We achieve these goals through educational programs, advocacy, technical assistance, and the development of markets to purchase recycled materials and manufacture products with recycled content.

We support HB 164

Yard "waste" such as leaves, grass and branches, is commonly collected for composting by local governments throughout Maryland. In fact, MDE's most recent waste and recycling report showed 341,961 tons were collected and managed at 23 permitted composting facilities operating in 13 Maryland counties. This is a tremendous success story. Adding yard waste collected from state-owned properties, including highways, will only add to our success. Throughout our state we are creating a usable lawn product and avoiding disposal of methane producing organic material. This is a win for Maryland's environment!

We thank Delegate Lehman for introducing this bill and urge its speedy passage.

The Maryland Recycling Network is a resource for legislators and others interested in recycling and waste reduction. Contact us at phoustle@marylandrecyclingnetwork.org, or 301-725-2508, or MRN, PO Box 1640, Columbia MD 21044, if you have any questions or would like additional information regarding our comments.

Sincerely

Chaz Miller
Chair, MRN Legislative Committee

HB0164Senate_IndivisibleHoCoMD_FAV_Konny.pdf

Uploaded by: Crystal Konny

Position: FAV



**HB0164 – State Buildings and State Highways –
Collection and Disposal of Yard Waste**

**Testimony before Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment
Committee**

March 24, 2026

Position: Favorable

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the committee, my name is Crystal Konny, and I represent the 1800+ members of Indivisible Howard County. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members). We are providing written testimony today in **support of HB0164**, which prohibits the disposal of yard waste collected on State property in a single-use plastic container, and ensures that the yard waste will be composted or turned into mulch. We appreciate the leadership of Del. Lehman and her colleagues for sponsoring this important legislation.

Methane is a powerful greenhouse gas that is produced when bacteria decompose organic plant matter in landfills. This bill will effectively reduce methane coming from yard waste collected on state-owned property and landfilled. It enables composting the organic waste on State property without further handling. It is an easy win for the environment.

Plastic bags are a huge problem for the environment on so many levels, from its production as a derivative of crude oil and natural gas, to litter, to wildlife harm. There is extensive research that demonstrates that plastic breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces that are ending up in human bodies, and both the plastic pieces and the chemicals plastics are made from are doing known and unknown damage to the human body. This bill will reduce single use plastic and help keep a bit more plastic out of landfills.

Howard County has been prohibiting home owners from using single-use plastic bags for lawn debris for years. It makes yard waste compostable without further handling, and it eliminates the use of plastic bags for this one usage. This bill allows the State to catch up with the Counties in mandating that plastic bags aren't used for yard waste.

The members of Indivisible Howard County support such common-sense measures to reduce waste and clean up our environment. Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

We respectfully urge a favorable committee report.

Crystal Konny
Columbia, MD
District 12A

MDE HB 164 SUP - EEE.pdf

Uploaded by: Jeremy D Baker

Position: FAV



**The Maryland Department of the Environment
Secretary Serena McIlwain**

House Bill 164

State Buildings and State Highways - Collection and Disposal of Yard Waste

Position: Support
Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment
Date: March 24, 2026
From: Jeremy D. Baker, Director of Government Relations

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) **SUPPORTS** HB 164.

Bill Summary

House Bill 164 would prohibit a person from disposing of yard waste collected on the grounds of a State building or State highway in a single-use plastic container. It would also require a person to collect yard waste on the grounds of a State building or State highway in a container that will not be discarded with the yard waste, or is a compostable paper bag. Finally the bill would require all yard waste collected on the grounds of a State building or State highway be disposed of using additional environmental best practices.

Position Rationale

Requiring that yard waste be collected in a container that will not be discarded with the yard waste or is compostable can save organic recyclers time and money because they will not have to unbag the waste during processing. MDE anticipates that this will help promote the additional diversion of yard waste from landfills and encourage local governments to adopt similar policies.

Accordingly, MDE asks for a **FAVORABLE** report for HB 164.

Contact: Jeremy D. Baker, Director of Government Relations
Cell: 443-931-0937, Email: jeremy.baker@maryland.gov

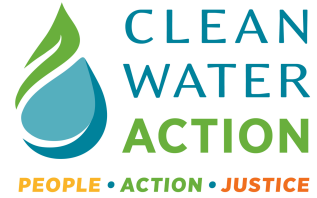
HB164 State Yard Waste_FAV_SignOn_7 organizations_

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Position: FAV



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Bill: HB 164 State Buildings and State Highways - Collection and Disposal of Yard Waste
Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment
Hearing Date: March 24, 2026
Position: **Support**

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and Honorable Committee Members:

We support HB 164 – State Buildings and State Highways - Collection and Disposal of Yard Waste, which prohibits disposing of yard waste collected on state building grounds or state highways in a single-use plastic container.

We enthusiastically support the goal of reducing plastic waste and supporting a transition away from single-use plastic. This bill's requirement to collect yard waste in a container that is not a single-use plastic container disposed of with the yard waste, or to collect and dispose of yard waste in a compostable paper bag, will make it easier to recycle organic materials. This will help further divert yard waste from disposal and support Maryland's recycling and diversion goals.

Prohibiting the collection and disposal of yard waste in single-use plastic containers also helps set a visible example to educate and support wider adoption of similar policies to transition away from single-use plastics in local jurisdictions.

For these reasons, we respectfully request a favorable report on HB 164.

Contact: Kelly Doordan (kelly@trashfreemaryland.org), Executive Director, Trash Free Maryland

Trash Free Maryland
Anacostia Riverkeeper
Clean Water Action
National Aquarium
Safe Skies Maryland
Vernal Pool Partners
Veteran Compost

HB0164_DNR_SUP_EEE_3-24-26.pdf

Uploaded by: Lydia McPherson

Position: FAV



Wes Moore, Governor
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor
Josh Kurtz, Secretary
David Goshorn, Deputy Secretary

March 24, 2026

BILL NUMBER: HOUSE BILL 164 – THIRD READER

SHORT TITLE: STATE BUILDINGS AND STATE HIGHWAYS - COLLECTION AND DISPOSAL OF YARD WASTE

DEPARTMENT’S POSITION: SUPPORT

EXPLANATION OF DEPARTMENT’S POSITION

This legislation serves to improve the disposal methods of recyclable yard waste generated in the course of gardening, landscaping, and tree trimming activities occurring on the grounds of state facilities through the prohibition of single-use plastic containers for such purposes. It also requires that yard waste collected on the grounds of a state building or state highway be disposed of at in-state organics recycling facilities, natural wood waste recycling facilities, or state facilities with the on-site capacity to create mulch or soil amendments. The Department of Natural Resources supports this effort to enhance the sustainability of maintenance work on state-owned land.

This legislation would have minimal fiscal and operational impacts on the department, as compostable yard waste bags typically cost more than conventional plastic bags, and disposal of yard waste at one of the three named facility types may incur higher transport and disposal fees. However, the addition of a 30-mile radius cap has helped to mitigate any additional transportation costs.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Disposing of organic plant waste such as leaves, garden waste, lawn cuttings, weeds, and prunings in single-use plastic containers is generally poor practice in that plastic does not decompose at the same rate as yard waste and prevents effective composting of organic material.

Most DNR-managed sites do not routinely dispose of yard waste off-site in single-use plastic containers. However, contractors of the state may do so more frequently, and therefore contract costs may increase accordingly for larger projects and landscape services.

BILL EXPLANATION

This bill would prohibit a person from disposing of yard waste collected on the grounds of a State building or State highway in a certain container; require a person to collect yard waste on the grounds of a State building or State highway in a certain container; require all yard waste collected on the grounds of a State building or State highway to be disposed of in a certain manner within a certain established range, provides an exemption for noxious weeds or invasive species; and generally relates to the collection and disposal of yard waste on the grounds of State buildings and State highways.

Contact: Lydia McPherson, Director, Legislative and Constituent Services
lydia.mcpherson1@maryland.gov ♦ 410-260-8113 (office) ♦ 443-875-7785 (cell)

HB 164_MDSierraClub_fav_EEE_24Mar2026.pdf

Uploaded by: Martha Ainsworth

Position: FAV

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Testimony on: HB 164 – “State Buildings and State Highways – Collection and Disposal of Yard Waste”

Position: Support

Hearing Date: March 24, 2026

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club supports HB 164, which would prohibit the use of single-use plastic containers for collection of yard waste by State employees or contractors on the grounds of a State building or State highway, and would require that collected yard waste be composted, recycled, or mulched. Removal and disposal of noxious weeds and invasive species are exempted from these requirements.

HB 164 would reduce pollution from plastic yard waste bags by State buildings and highways and ensure that the collected yard waste is not disposed in a landfill, where it would generate methane, a powerful greenhouse gas, as it decomposes in the absence of oxygen. Yard waste sent to composting facilities in plastic bags can result in substantial plastic pollution and contamination of the compost (see Exhibit 1).

According to correspondence with the Department of Legislative Services, the three departments that are most involved in yard waste removal are the Department of General Services (DGS), the Department of Transportation (MDOT), and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). DGS already uses reusable containers to dispose of yard waste and MDOT usually collects a large volume of yard waste using heavy machinery that transports it directly to their destination. However, DNR and its contractors sometimes do use single-use plastic containers for yard waste, in some cases to contain invasive species and listed noxious weeds.

It is likely that yard waste collections from State buildings and highways in some parts of the State are using plastic bags in collection and/or are disposing of yard waste in landfills. Based on a review of their websites, at least sixteen counties do not accept yard waste in plastic bags.¹ However, the cities of Baltimore and Salisbury explicitly require that yard waste be placed in a plastic bag. The websites of five counties made no mention of the type of yard waste bags. Some counties direct yard waste to a landfill, not a composting facility.

Reducing plastic pollution and landfill methane emissions is important to prevent adverse climate and human health impacts, and the cost of compliance by State agencies is minimal, according to the fiscal and policy note. We respectfully request a favorable report on HB 164.

Martha Ainsworth
Chair, Chapter Zero Waste Team
Martha.Ainsworth@mdsierra.org

Josh Tulkin
Chapter Director
Josh.Tulkin@MDSierra.org

Exhibit 1 - Shredded plastic bag waste at the Prince George’s County Yard Waste Facility (2013), before a ban on plastic yard waste bags was enforced.

¹ Anne Arundel, Baltimore County, Caroline, Carroll, Cecil, Charles, Frederick, Garrett, Harford, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George’s, St. Mary’s, Somerset, Washington (Hagerstown & Boonsboro), and Worcester counties. Kent County requires that residential yard waste be provided in containers, while in Dorchester County, plastic yard waste bags are “not recommended.” It is often unclear whether the yard waste is being sent to a composting facility or a landfill.

Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America’s oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has approximately 800,000 members.

Exhibit 1: Shredded plastic bag waste at the Prince George’s County Yard Waste Facility in 2013, before a ban on plastic yard waste bags was enforced



HB164 Yard Waste LEHMAN Testimony EEE.pdf

Uploaded by: Mary Lehman

Position: FAV

DELEGATE MARY A. LEHMAN
Legislative District 21
Prince George's and
Anne Arundel Counties

Government, Labor, and
Elections Committee

Chair

Local Government/Bi-County
Agencies and Administration
Subcommittee



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB 164

State Building and Highway – Collection and Disposal of Yard Waste

March 24, 2026

Support

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Esteemed Members of the Committee:

I am asking for your favorable report for HB 164, a bill that prohibits both state employees and contractors from using single-use plastic bags for yard waste when working on state lands and along state highways. The House passed this bill in both 2024 and 2025. It was voted on and passed last year by the Senate Education, Energy and Education Committee but was not voted on in full Senate before the end of 2025 Legislative Session.

The bill requires the yard waste, whether bagged or unbagged, to be disposed of at an organic recycling or a natural wood recycling facility. The Department of Environment has confirmed that these facilities have the capacity for the disposal of this waste. The bill makes an exemption when there is no organics recycling or natural wood recycling facility within thirty miles of where the yard waste is collected.

Instead of single-use plastic bags, the bill requires that state employees and contractors to either use a compostable container, such as a brown paper yard waste bag, or a container that will not be discarded with the yard waste, e.g., a reusable container. Under current Maryland law, there are no restrictions on the employment of single-use plastic containers for yard waste collection on the grounds of state buildings and along state highways.

HB 164 ensures that yard waste collected on state lands and along state highways is disposed of in a more environmentally conscious manner. When single-use plastic bags are used, the collected yard waste, along with the plastic bag, frequently ends up in landfill. According to the World Wildlife Fund, the bags then take up to twenty years to break down.¹ If they go to a composting facility, the plastic bags are often shredded along with the yard waste. The issue of disintegrating plastic forces the composting facilities to either invest in imperfect plastic-screening technology, which adds both time and cost to an already slow and expensive process, or to simply produce a contaminated product.

To date, over one third of Maryland's counties have enacted similar policies for residential yard waste pickup. It is time for the state to operate under the same standards.

Thank you and I urge a favorable report.

¹ World Wildlife Fund, "The Lifecycle of Plastics," July 1, 2021

HB 164 - CBF - FAV - EEE.pdf

Uploaded by: Matt Stegman

Position: FAV



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

House Bill 164

State Buildings and State Highways – Collection and Disposal of Yard Waste

Date: March 24, 2026

To: Education, Energy, & the Environment Committee

Position: **Favorable**

From: Gussie Maguire,
MD Staff Scientist

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS House Bill 164**, which requires that yard waste collected from the grounds of a state building or state highway be collected in a reusable container or compostable paper bag and sent to organics recycling or mulching facilities if facilities with adequate receiving capacity are located within a 30-mile radius.

CBF supports the state's transition away from single-use plastic and diversion of yard waste from landfill disposal. Use of reusable containers or compostable paper bags simplifies and prevents contamination of organic materials recycling and supports Maryland's recycling and diversion goals.

Prohibiting the collection and disposal of state yard waste in single-use plastic containers also helps set a visible example for municipalities, encouraging wider adoption of similar policies to transition away from single-use plastic use in local jurisdictions.

CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on HB 164.

For more information, please contact Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney, at mstegman@cbf.org.

Maryland Office • Philip Merrill Environmental Center • 6 Herndon Avenue • Annapolis • Maryland • 21403

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With over 200,000 members and e-subscribers, including 71,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.

HB0164 crossover FAV - Collection and Disposal of

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

HB0164_CrossOver_Bill_RichardKaplowitz_FAV
03/24/2026
Richard Keith Kaplowitz
Frederick, MD 21703

TESTIMONY ON CROSSOVER BILL HB#/0164 – FAVORABLE

State Buildings and State Highways - Collection and Disposal of Yard Waste

TO: Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard K. Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3. I am submitting this testimony in support of Crossover Bill HB0164, State Buildings and State Highways - Collection and Disposal of Yard Waste

Proper disposal of yard waste in Maryland is critical because state law prohibits it from landfills, as it accounts for up to 20% of local solid waste. Proper handling prevents nutrient runoff from polluting the [Chesapeake Bay](#), reduces greenhouse gas emissions, and turns organic materials into compost rather than wasting landfill space.¹

Key reasons for proper disposal include:

- **Environmental Protection:** Leaves and grass clippings entering storm drains contribute to nutrient pollution, causing algae growth that harms fish in the Chesapeake Bay.
- **Regulatory Compliance:** [Maryland law](#) generally prohibits yard waste in landfills, requiring it to be composted or recycled.
- **Lawn & Garden Health:** Leaving grass clippings (grasscycling) acts as free fertilizer, returning valuable nitrogen to the soil.
- **Prevents Flooding & Pests:** Proper disposal stops debris from clogging storm drains, which causes flooding, and eliminates standing water that attracts disease-carrying insects.
- **Sustainability:** Diverting organic material from landfills reduces greenhouse gases and produces beneficial compost.

Methods for proper disposal include backyard composting, utilizing local municipal curbside collection programs, or using designated drop-off sites.

This bill will prohibit a person from disposing of yard waste collected on the grounds of a State building or State highway in single-use plastic container; require a person to collect yard waste on the grounds of a State building or State highway in a container that will not be discarded with the yard waste or in a compostable paper bag; and requires all yard waste collected on the grounds of a State building or State highway to be disposed of in a certain manner under certain circumstances.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report and pass CrossOver Bill HB0164.

¹ Google AI Search “why proper disposal of yard waste is important in Maryland”

RJR-(RESA) House Bill 164-State Buildings and Stat

Uploaded by: Richard Reinhardt

Position: FAV



Senator Brian J. Feldman, Chair
Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice-Chair
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: *House Bill 164: State Buildings and State Highways - Collection and Disposal of Yard Waste - SUPPORT*

March 24, 2026

Dear Chairman Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and Committee Members:

On behalf of the Maryland Turfgrass Council (MTC) and the Mid-Atlantic Sports Field Management Association, we write this letter in support of House Bill 164: *State Buildings and State Highways - Collection and Disposal of Yard Waste*.

The Maryland Turfgrass Council (MTC) is a non-profit organization that represents all areas of the turf industry including golf, sports turf, sod producers, landscape, lawncare and commercial vendors and suppliers. The Mid-Atlantic Sports Field Management Association (MASFMA) is a non-profit organization that is composed of sports turf field managers and workers from Maryland, Delaware, Washington D.C., and Northern Virginia. Once again, MASFMA has partnered with Maryland Turfgrass Council (MTC) this year to bring a more unified front from all aspects of our industry.

As written, HB164, would prohibit State employees or contractors from disposing of yard waste collected on the grounds of a State building or a State highway in a single-use plastic container. In addition, the bill requires that such yard waste be collected in a container that will not be discarded with the yard waste or that is a compostable paper bag.

This legislation was introduced last year and successfully passed the House chamber. According to the Department of Legislative Services' (DLS) fiscal (from 2025), it states that fiscal impacts to state, local and business effects would be "minimal". Moreover, the fiscal note also state that "most State agencies responsible for the removal of large quantities of yard waste from State buildings or highways indicate that the bill has no fiscal effect on their operations."

Given the minimal impacts, but the environmental importance this legislation would have to the State, MTC and MASFMA firmly supports the passage of HB164 and humbly seeks this committee for a FAVORABLE report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Clint Steele".

Clint Steele
President, MASFMA

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Logan Freeman".

Logan Freeman
President. MTC