



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

April 1st 2026

SB599

**On-Farm Organics and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Programs -
Established
Environment and Transportation Committee
Position: Favorable**

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of **Senate Bill 599**. The Maryland Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

Senate Bill 599 establishes a comprehensive statewide effort to reduce food waste and expand organic recycling through three grant programs. The On-Farm Organics Diversion and Recycling Grant Program within the Department of Agriculture will support farmers and agricultural partners in developing on-farm composting, organics recycling, soil-building practices, and food-rescue initiatives. Additionally, the bill creates the Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Program and the County Wasted Food Reduction Block Grant Program within the Department of the Environment to fund community and county-level projects that reduce, rescue, and divert wasted food before it reaches landfills.

Senate Bill 599 takes a proactive, solutions-oriented approach to one of Maryland's most persistent environmental and economic challenges: the overwhelming amount of organic waste and edible food that ends up in our landfills. Food waste is not just an environmental issue; it is a moral and economic one. When salvageable food is discarded, families lose access to nutrition, farmers lose revenue, and communities carry the burden of increased disposal costs and rising methane emissions. This legislation provides the necessary tools to reverse that trend through prevention, rescue, and responsible recycling.

From a Catholic perspective, **Senate Bill 599** also reflects our shared moral responsibility to care for creation and to uphold the dignity of every person. Catholic social teaching reminds us that the goods of the earth are meant for all and that waste—especially of food—undermines both stewardship and solidarity. By reducing unnecessary disposal and strengthening systems that rescue edible food for those in need, this legislation embodies the principles of the common good and preferential option for the poor. It calls us to be faithful stewards of God's creation, ensuring that the blessings of our land are used wisely, sustainably, and in service to our neighbors.

Supporting these grant programs is a meaningful step toward building a cleaner, healthier, and more sustainable Maryland. It invests directly in our agricultural communities, improves local soil and water quality, strengthens food security, and advances our statewide climate goals. Most importantly, it encourages collaboration, creativity, and long-term solutions—values Marylander’s share.

I respectfully urge a favorable report on this proactive and practical legislation that supports our farmers, protects our environment, and ensures that less food goes to waste and more goes to Maryland families.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference urges a favorable report on **Senate Bill 599**.