



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

House Bill 429

On-Farm Organics and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Programs - Established

Position: Informational
Committee: Environment and Transportation
Date: February 11, 2026
From: Jeremy D. Baker, Director of Government Relations

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) submits this **LETTER OF INFORMATION** for HB 429.

Bill Summary

HB 429 would establish three grant programs: On-Farm Organics Diversion and Recycling Grant Program, Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Program, and the County Wasted Food Reduction Block Grant Program.

Position Rationale

MDE supports this bill's goals and is appreciative of the work the sponsor has done to elevate this issue, but note the absence of a funding mechanism. The Office of Recycling already manages two programs—electronics and school compost—that are inactive due to a lack of resources. To successfully implement new programs outlined in the bill, MDE would require additional funding and staff, and suggests incorporating into the bill a sustainable funding mechanism.

MDE also proposes transitioning from individual project grants to a County Block Grant model to reduce administrative overhead. Under this system, funding would be distributed to counties proportional to their population, bypassing the need for a resource-intensive State review process. This approach allows counties to use their local expertise to better serve overburdened communities, while MDE retains its role in verifying eligible expenses at the end of each year.

MDE hopes this **INFORMATIONAL** testimony regarding HB 429 is helpful. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions.

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