



Barbara Nouveau, Executive Director, DoTheMostGood—Montgomery County

TESTIMONY ON: HB589—Solid Waste Management—Organics Recycling and Waste Diversion—Food Residuals

POSITION: Favorable

HEARING DATE: February 19, 2020

BILL CONTACT: Delegate Lorig Charkoudian

To: The Honorable Kumar P. Barve, Chair, House Environment and Transportation Committee, and Committee Members

DoTheMostGood—Montgomery County (DTMG) is a progressive grass-roots organization with more than 1600 members who live in a wide range of communities from Bethesda near the DC line north to Germantown and beyond, and from Potomac east to Silver Spring and Olney. DTMG supports legislation and activities that keep its members healthy and safe in a clean environment.

DTMG strongly supports HB589 because it will mandate, over a phased in period of time, increasingly smaller producers of food waste to (a) separate food from other waste by donating serviceable food, (b) provide for its agricultural use (including use as animal feed), (c) manage it on a system installed on site, or (d) provide for the collection and transportation of the food waste for processing in an organics recycling facility.

Waste food is a growing problem in our modern society. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, in 2017 alone almost 41 million tons of food waste were generated, with little more than six percent diverted from landfills and incinerators for composting. EPA estimates that more food reaches landfills and incinerators than any other single material in our everyday trash, constituting approximately 22 percent of discarded municipal solid waste. Additionally, the Department of Agriculture estimated that in 2010, 31 percent (133 billion pounds) of the 430 billion pounds of food produced was not available for human consumption at the retail or consumer levels, meaning that one-third of the available food was not eaten.

It is indisputable that most useable food waste is not donated to feed those with food insecurity, used for agricultural purposes, or composted. It is incinerated with the residue buried in landfills or not incinerated and directly buried. We have been doing this for many decades. What is wrong with this? Simply put, incineration is a source of environmental pollution. Burning trash, including food waste, releases 90% more greenhouse gas emissions per unit of energy than coal. Trash incineration also releases toxins, such as dioxins, furans and mercury, nitrogen oxides (NOx), and PM 2.5 (small particulate matter) into the air. NOx contributes to ozone pollution, which can cause chest pain, coughing, and increased risk of asthma attacks, and exposure to PM 2.5 can cause

lung damage and increased risk of heart attacks. Furthermore, burning trash creates a toxic ash that still needs to be disposed of. Trash ash needs to be spread out in landfills to decrease the concentration of toxins that leach into the soil, so the ash actually takes up more landfill space than disposal of regular trash in landfills.

Finally, many landfills lack proper on-site waste management, thereby contributing to additional threats to the environment. In the long-term, landfills leak and pollute ground water and other neighboring environmental habitats, making waste management very difficult. Landfills also give off potentially unsafe gases.

As we strive to improve public health and the environment, and address climate change, an essential step is to mandate food composting and recycling programs. Nearly 100 cities now divert food waste from landfills. Maryland needs to catch up.

For all of the reasons mentioned above, DTMG strongly supports HB589 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report on this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

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