



Maryland Climate Coalition

Committee: Environment and Transportation
Testimony on: HB 0589 - “Solid Waste Management - Organics Recycling and Waste Diversion -- Food Residuals”
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: February 19, 2020

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for allowing our testimony today. The Maryland Climate Coalition brings together environmental, faith, health, labor, and civic organizations to advance clean energy and climate policies in Maryland. Comprised of national, regional, state, and local advocacy organizations, the Maryland Climate Coalition is committed to advancing policies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

We strongly urge you to support HB 0589 (hereinafter referred to as “the Organics Recycling and Waste Diversion bill”). Diversion of food waste from landfills and incinerators will reduce landfill methane emissions and the toxic emissions from incinerators. Methane is a several times more potent greenhouse gas than CO₂.

According to the EPA, food waste is the single largest category of waste sent by municipalities to landfills and incinerators, accounting for 22% percent of waste.¹ According to the 2017 book “Drawdown--The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming” food waste is the number three cause of global warming. 10 of the 80 ranked solutions to protect the climate intersect with food waste or compost in some way (food waste reduction, bioplastics, regenerative agriculture, methane digesters, household recycling, landfill methane, composting, nutrient management, and biochar). Together they underscore the importance of redirecting valuable organic materials from polluting disposal facilities into clean biogas and soil amendments.

¹ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency 2017 Report, “Advancing Sustainable Materials Management.”
https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2019-figures_fact_sheet_final.pdf

Compost is the best way to add organic material to soil. Soil can act as a huge carbon sink to help balance out greenhouse gas emissions. Healthy soils are rich in microbes, high in organic matter, store carbon, are stable, and retain water.

Moreover, the Organics Recycling and Waste Diversion bill will stimulate investment in and expansion of needed capacity to handle recycling of food waste as well as encourage economic development by bringing businesses to Maryland. The bill will reduce solid waste disposed and at the same time capture a valuable resource to improve soil quality, support agriculture, conserve water, and reduce and sequester greenhouse gas emissions.

It will help to accomplish these goals while at the same time supporting local food systems and incentivizing the creation of green jobs in Maryland. Expanding composting and local compost use could support almost 1,400 new full-time jobs in Maryland, according to a 2013 study by the Institute for Local Self Reliance. Expanding compost would support both new and existing compost facilities, but also supports Maryland businesses that use compost for soil erosion control, storm water management, green infrastructure, and other purposes.

For these reasons, we urge you to support HB 0589, the Organics Recycling and Waste Diversion bill.

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