



Montgomery County

Office of Intergovernmental Relations

ROCKVILLE: 240-777-6550

ANNAPOLIS: 240-777-8270

HB 589

DATE: February 19, 2020

SPONSOR: Delegate Charkoudian, *et al.*

ASSIGNED TO: Environment and Transportation

CONTACT PERSON: Amy Samman (amy.samman@montgomerycountymd.gov)

POSITION: SUPPORT (Montgomery Department of Environmental Protection)

Solid Waste Management – Organics Recycling and Waste Diversion – Food Residuals

House Bill 589 requires certain generators of large quantities of “food residuals” to separate the food residuals from solid waste and ensure that the food residuals are diverted from final disposal in a refuse disposal system, as specified. The implementation timeline for this requirement is staggered, beginning January 1, 2021. The bill requires the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) to: (1) establish guidelines to assist businesses with compliance and (2) develop mapping and other systems to identify existing composting facilities, as specified.

The Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection (MCDEP) supports House Bill 589. Organics are a major source of methane gas from landfills, so preventing these materials from being landfilled is beneficial to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Processing organics through composting is also a more cost-effective management alternative than disposal. In addition, products such as Leafgro® and Leafgro® Gold are models of how localities can be innovative when recycling organic materials into new, useful and marketable products.

In Montgomery County, our most recent waste composition study completed in 2017 determined that food residuals or food scraps make up a significant portion of our waste, and that the largest generator source is the commercial sector. We estimate that as much as 120,000 tons of food scraps were found disposed in the overall waste stream. The requirements proposed in House Bill 589 align well with our efforts to implement the activities and initiatives identified in our *Strategic Plan to Advance Composting, Compost Use and Food Scraps Diversion*.

This legislation serves to help in market development, attracting operators of food scraps recycling facilities to expand existing organics recycling facilities, and encouraging additional operators to perhaps locate in the state of Maryland.

For all of these reasons, the MCDEP supports proposed House Bill 589 and statewide requirements pertaining to diversion and recycling of food residuals.