

Testimony of Jeremy Criss
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In Support of Senate Bill 229
Environment – On-Farm Composting Facilities – Permit Exemption
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
January 21, 2022

I want to thank the Committee for this opportunity to speak in support to Senate Bill 229.

This legislation will increase the On-Farm Composting Facility Permit Exemption allowable threshold for composting certain Type 2 feedstocks, including food scraps from off-farm from 5,000 square feet to 40,000 square feet.

As a member of the 2014 Composting Facilities Working Group, I advocated for a Permit Exemption to help expand opportunities for On-Farm Composting in Montgomery County and the State.

When the Composting Facilities Regulations were adopted in 2015, I accepted the 5,000 square foot area limitation for the on-farm composting of Type 2 feedstocks such as food scraps as the first step for Maryland.

Since 2015, the Montgomery County Office of Agriculture has been working with farming operations to explore the 5,000 square foot area including the use of different feedstocks as part of the operation.

We learned that the 5,000 square foot area is a very limiting factor, and it creates a disincentive economically for farmers to implement on-farm composting.

One of these farms installed a maximum of 5,000 square feet and they are composting Type 1 and 2 feedstocks to produce a valuable product and soil amendment that is applied to the farmland in accordance with their Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plan and Nutrient Management Plan to increase soil health.

Last year, Montgomery County adopted a Zoning Text Amendment 20-04 to expand opportunities for on-farm composting which allows up to 50% of the materials being composted from offsite including food scraps.

The Composting Facilities Regulations currently allow farmers to compost materials generated from the farm up to a maximum of 40,000 square feet without a permit from the Maryland Department of the Environment.

The intent of Senate Bill 229 is to replicate this existing provision in the Composting Facilities Regulations and apply it to Type 2 feedstocks which includes food scraps with the requirement of a Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plan and Nutrient Management Plan and best management practices such as immediate mixing with carbon materials record keeping.

Thank you again and I would ask the Committee for a favorable report on Senate Bill 229.