

Testimony for HB0264
“Solid Waste Management--Organics Waste Management and Waste
Diversion--Food Residuals”

Committee: Environment and Transportation

Organization: Montgomery Countryside Alliance
Person Submitting: Joyce Bailey, Education Chair
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: January 27, 2021

Dear Mr. Chairman and Committee Members,

Thank you for allowing our testimony today in support of HB0264. The Montgomery Countryside Alliance was founded to promote sound economic, land-use and transportation policies that preserve the natural environment, open spaces and rural lands in Montgomery County’s Agricultural Reserve for the benefit of all Washington Metropolitan area residents.

We urge you to vote favorably for HB0264. The bill will serve to reduce methane and other greenhouse gasses and toxic pollutants emitted by landfills, incinerators, and agriculture; reduce run off to our waterways and the Chesapeake Bay; rebuild healthy soils; and create jobs.

Food Donations: HB 0264 also allows food donation as a waste reduction strategy. When similar legislation passed in Vermont, **food donation increased by at least 30%**, taking usable food and getting it into the hands of food banks and hungry people. As the need for supplemental food continues to rise in our county food donation would be of considerable value

Bill Requirements: This Organics Recycling bill would require entities that produce more than two tons of food waste per week AND that are within 30 miles of a compost or other food recovery facility to otherwise divert this material from the waste stream through donations, reduction, or anaerobic digestion. In 2024, the requirement would apply to entities that produce more than one ton of food waste per week.

More than 25% food supply wasted: Food waste is a persistent problem, with more than 25% of the overall food supply at the retail and consumer level going uneaten and wasted. Large generators of food waste produce most of the organic waste in the state – facilities that generate more than one ton of food waste a week contribute more than half of Maryland’s organic waste. HB 0264 allows food donation as a waste reduction

strategy. When similar legislation passed in Vermont, food donation increased by at least 30%, taking usable food and getting it into the hands of food banks and hungry people.

Stimulates economic development: 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 disposal and at the same time capture a valuable resource to improve soil quality, support agriculture, conserve water, and reduce and sequester greenhouse gas emissions. As we look to alternatives to incineration and landfills, recycling and composting of food waste are essential.

Creates jobs: It will help to accomplish these goals while at the same time supporting local food systems and creating 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, and also support Maryland businesses that use compost for soil erosion control, stormwater management, green infrastructure, and other purposes.

Reduces greenhouse gas emissions: Diversion of food waste from landfills and incinerators will reduce landfill methane emissions and the toxic emissions from incinerators. Landfills account for 17% of Maryland's methane emissions, a greenhouse gas that is 86 times more potent than CO₂ in its first 20 years after emission.

According to the EPA, food scraps and food waste are the largest portion of waste sent by municipalities to landfills and incinerators, accounting for as much as 51 percent of waste. According to the 2017 book "Drawdown--The Most comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming," reducing food waste offers solutions to the number three cause of global warming. Ten 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 soil amendments.

Builds Healthy Soils & Reduces Runoff: Food scraps and waste are an excellent source of material for making compost and adding compost to our soils results in building healthy soils. This is consistent with our promotion of regenerative agricultural within the Agricultural Reserve in order to sequester additional carbon in the soil. Healthy soils and the plants that grow in them,

hold carbon in the ground, sequestering carbon. Healthy soils are rich in microbes, high in organic matter, store carbon, are stable, and retain water. We need sustainable, long term solutions to managing our organic waste and supporting the growth of composting is a win-win strategy.

For these reasons we urge to vote favorably for HB0264.