



January 23, 2017

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB99, YARD WASTE and FOOD RESIDUALS DIVERSION and INFRASTRUCTURE - STUDY

The Montgomery County Food Council was launched in 2012 and connects a diverse group of stakeholders, with a mission to influence key aspects of the food system (production, processing, distribution, access, consumption and recycling) to enhance the environmental, economic, social and nutritional health of County residents.

At this time two of the Council's four working groups have ongoing projects aimed at diverting food residuals from the waste stream. Our Food Recovery and Access working group guides the County's Community Food Rescue pilot program which connects businesses with food to donate to hunger relief organizations. Food that is not fit for human consumption is targeted first for animal feed as appropriate and then as compostable material for soil enhancement both on and off farm. Our Environmental Impact working group has held public meetings providing guidance to farmers related to the new COMAR regulations, introduced in July of 2015, that allow additional quantities of feedstock for on farm composting. We also have worked closely with Montgomery County Council and Department of Environmental Protection in the development, passage, and implementation of Bill 28-16, "Strategic Plan to Advance Composting, Compost Use, and Food Waste Diversion" in 2016.

We support a work group that would bring together the stakeholders as detailed in SB99, and the Food Council supports the amendments as proposed. We recommend the inclusion of a representative of a wastewater treatment facility/utility. The Food Council participates in the county's Solid Waste Advisory Committee, which, like other Maryland counties, has been investigating methods for implementing countywide diversion of food scraps. While this is clearly a complicated issue, there are many examples in other States and counties of successful programs that we hope the task force will look to as useful models. We would urge the work group to make use of the valuable work that has already been done to describe different approaches to yard waste and food residual diversion. We are available to advise the work group in analysis that would accelerate the process of creating operational guidelines for organic waste diversion. Yard waste and food residuals diversion is a critical component of the State's responsibility for promoting healthy soil and water and for accomplishing the State's recycling goals. There is significant business development and economic stimulus that would result from a comprehensive program for the diversion of organics from the waste stream.

The Montgomery County Food Council fully supports the passage of HB 743.

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