



February 24, 2016

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 743, YARD WASTE and FOOD RESIDUALS DIVERSION and INFRASTRUCTURE TASK FORCE

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 five working groups have ongoing projects aimed at diverting food residuals from the waste stream. Our Food Recovery 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 support a task force that would bring together the stakeholders as detailed in HB 743. 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 task force 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 task force 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.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Heather Bruskin".

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