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House Committee on Environment & Transportation

House Bill 1349 – Environment – Compostable, Degradable, and Biodegradable Plastic Products – Labeling

Position: Support

March 1st, 2017

Cary Oshins
Associate Director
US Composting Council
Reston, VA

The US Composting Council thanks Delegate Robinson for introducing HB1349, which if passed will reduce contamination and improve profitability of Maryland's composting facilities.

Maryland, like the country as a whole, has a growing demand to reduce food waste. Wasted food, that cannot be fed to people or animals, is far better being composted than disposed of in a landfill, where it generates methane, a powerful contributor to global climate change. However, food is often discarded with associated containers, utensils, and other non-food items. When these items arrive at a composting facility, the compost manufacturer must spend money removing these contaminants before they have a finished, useable product. However, if these items are compostable, and can break down at the same speed as the food and other materials being composted, then they no longer require additional expense to remove.

Fortunately, the ingenuity of the manufacturing sector has risen to this challenge, producing serviceware, containers and bags that are truly compostable and can replace traditional plastics in food-related applications. Many residents and businesses, aware of the environmental advantages of these products, will preferentially purchase them, often even at a higher price point. On the other hand, there are less-than-scrupulous manufacturers who will take advantage of this and label a product as compostable, biodegradable, and otherwise environmentally preferred, even when they cannot prove that is true.

HB1349 will address this situation by requiring anyone who claims their product as compostable to meet certain well-established standards. Furthermore, it prevents the use of terms such as "biodegradable," "degradable," or "decomposable" except

in certain circumstances (such as for ag mulch film meeting a biodegradable soil standard) as these terms are generally misleading to the public.

Growing an organics recycling infrastructure is no easy task. It takes many different pieces of policy, such as this one. But the reward for this work is a more sustainable society.

We urge you to positively report on HB 1349.

US Composting Council

About the US Composting Council

The US Composting Council (USCC), a 501(c)6 Trade and Professional Association, is the only national organization in the United States dedicated to the development, expansion and promotion of the composting industry. The USCC has over 800 member companies, including private and municipal compost producers, equipment manufacturers, product suppliers, academic institutions, public agencies, nonprofit groups and consulting/engineering firms. The USCC achieves this mission by encouraging, supporting and performing compost related research, promoting best management practices, establishing standards, educating professionals and the public about the benefits of composting and compost utilization, enhancing compost product quality, and developing training materials for composters and markets for compost products.

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