



Senate Bill 99

*Department of the Environment – Yard Waste, Food Residuals, and Other Organic
Materials Diversion and Infrastructure - Study*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Environment and Transportation Committee

Date: March 22, 2017

From: Leslie Knapp, Jr.

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 99 as amended. The bill requires the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) to conduct a study regarding the diversion and composting of yard waste, food residuals, and other organic materials.

Diversion, composting, and other promising technologies like anaerobic digestion are needed to address food scraps and yard waste. According to MDE, food waste makes up 22% of the solid waste disposed of in the United States. Maryland already recycles 43% of its municipal solid waste (exceeding the national rate), but the state's food recycling rate is a little less than 15%. As recycling, reuse, and diversion of other kinds of solid waste have become successful in Maryland, the share of food and yard waste in landfills has grown proportionately.

MACo has generally supported creating a regulatory climate that makes composting and anaerobic digestion practical activities in the state while not simply placing new mandates on county governments. As the bill acknowledges, flexible options are needed because, given Maryland's diverse geography and demographics, a "one size fits all" approach will not yield successful results.

The bill incorporates several amendments requested by MACo (and already adopted and passed by this Committee in the bill's cross-file, HB 171). The amendments to the study include:

1. Identification of infrastructure needs and challenges related to yard waste, food residuals, and other organic materials composting and diversion that are unique to the different geographic regions of the state;
2. Identification of any applicable sanity and public health concerns related to yard waste, food residuals, and other organic material composting and diversion;
3. Development of, in consultation with local governments, model guidelines and best practices for the local identification of properties or development zones where diversion infrastructure may be developed (instead of having MDE assume a land use role by making such identifications itself);
4. Removal of study language regarding the recommendation of a refuse disposal fee; and
5. Receipt of affected local governments' approval before recommending a pilot food waste recovery program in the Elkridge and Jessup area.

MACo believes these amendments enhance and refine the study's core purpose while acknowledging regional differences and protecting local land use autonomy. Accordingly, MACo urges the Committee to give SB 99 a **FAVORABLE** report.