

BILL: House Bill 264
TITLE: Solid Waste Management - Organics Recycling and Waste Diversion –
Food Residuals
DATE: January 27, 2021
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Environment and Transportation
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) opposes House Bill 264, due to the uniform, mandated, and costly staffing and waste management responsibilities imposed by the bill's requirements for the recycling/composting of food waste generated by local school systems.

MABE consistently supports funding and policy decisions to strengthen school meal programs to provide healthy food for all students and expand access for economically disadvantaged students. In this context, MABE is concerned about the unintended consequences of imposing new costs on school food service programs that would compete with, and therefore potentially detract from, our efforts to utilize existing and too often scarce resources to support school meal programs.

House Bill 264 would require school systems to budget for and implement new programs to separate the food residuals from other solid waste and ensure that the food residuals are diverted from final disposal in a refuse disposal system by:

- reducing the amount of food residuals generated;
- donating servable food;
- managing the food residuals in an organics recycling system installed on-site;
- providing for the collection and transportation of the food residuals for agricultural use, including for use as animal feed;
- providing for the collection and transportation of the food residuals for processing in an organics recycling facility; or
- any combination of the above.

Clearly, this is an extensive set of well-intendent requirements which are currently unfunded and unbudgeted. MABE believes that whether implemented in whole or in part, these requirements would impose substantial costs as well as unsupported demands on food services and facilities staff. To the extent that additional staff are required to carry out these new tasks, equipment must be purchased, and hauling contracts must be developed, without additional state or local funding these new requirements would, foreseeably, negatively impact a school system's ability to sustain other food service and facilities services.

MABE does appreciate the provisions of the bill extending dates for mandated implementation and providing for waivers. However, once enacted, this new law would set in motion a significant unfunded mandate for local school systems.

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on House Bill 264.