



Maryland Chapter  
P.O. Box 278  
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**Committee:** Appropriations  
**Testimony on:** HB 566 “School Construction – Design Documents – Waste Disposal Infrastructure”  
**Position:** Support  
**Hearing Date:** February 17, 2022

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club urges you to support HB566. This bill requires the Interagency Commission on School Construction to adopt certain regulations for county boards of education to include waste disposal infrastructure in certain design documents.

Benefits of this legislation include:

- **Convenient and well-marked stations for students to separate food waste, recyclables, trash, and liquids.** Incorporating this design into newly constructed schools will place new schools in Maryland at the forefront of what will be standard practice in the future -- diverting food waste and recyclables from the landfill and separating liquids to reduce contamination of recyclables.
- **Incorporation of waste disposal sorting stations into school buildings at low cost, at the time they are built.** While the Sierra Club believes it is worthwhile to retrofit all schools for diversion of food scraps, recyclables, and liquids from the trash, we recognize that it can be done at lower cost when incorporated into new school construction.
- **Reduction in future methane emissions and conservation of landfill space.** In landfills, food waste undergoes anaerobic decomposition (without oxygen), emitting methane, a potent greenhouse gas that contributes significantly to climate change. In addition to reducing future landfill methane emissions, food scrap diversion will conserve landfill space, which is in short supply.
- **Reduction of costs to counties and taxpayers for waste disposal.** Diversion of food waste and liquids will significantly decrease the weight and volume of trash destined for the landfill or incinerator, reducing costs to counties and taxpayers.
- **Increased demand for composting infrastructure and businesses.** The bill will promote schools’ ability to separate food scraps from other waste. By utilizing this infrastructure to separate food waste, schools will provide existing and future composting businesses with a flow of high quality food waste and incentivize investments in new composting infrastructure.
- **Reduction in the need for chemical fertilizers.** Compost is a valuable resource, reducing the need for fertilizers and enriching soil, which better filters and absorbs runoff.
- **Education of staff and students on the benefits of waste diversion.** Incorporating the infrastructure for food waste and liquid diversion into schools raises students’ awareness of the connection between personal habits and the environment.

With the enactment of HB566, the infrastructure needed for students and staff to sort, separate, and divert food waste and recyclables from trash becomes a reality for new schools, and sets in motion environmentally sound behaviors among school children to last a lifetime. The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club respectfully requests a favorable report on HB 566.

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Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America’s oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has approximately 800,000 members.