

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2021 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
Third Reader

Senate Bill 304

(Senator Pinsky, *et al.*)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Environment and Transportation and  
Economic Matters

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Maryland Recycling Act - Recyclable Materials and Resource Recovery Facilities  
- Alterations

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This bill (1) repeals a county's authority to use one or more resource recovery facilities (that were in operation as of January 1, 1988) to achieve a 5% reduction in its solid waste stream for the purposes of meeting required solid waste reductions and mandatory recycling rates under the Maryland Recycling Act (MRA); (2) excludes incinerator ash from the definition of "recyclable materials" for the purposes of MRA; and (3) makes conforming changes, including repealing the definition of a "resource recovery facility."

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** State finances are not materially affected; the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) can implement the bill's changes with existing budgeted staff and resources.

**Local Effect:** Minimal overall, but potential meaningful increase in local expenditures to meet MRA recycling rates and revise county plans for Baltimore City and Baltimore and Montgomery counties, as discussed below. Local revenues are not affected. **This bill may impose a mandate on a unit of local government.**

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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Analysis

**Current Law:** "Recyclable materials" means those materials that (1) would otherwise become solid waste for disposal in a refuse disposal system and (2) may be collected,

separated, composted, or processed and returned to the marketplace in the form of raw materials or products. A “resource recovery facility” is a facility that was in existence as of January 1, 1988, that (1) processes solid waste to produce valuable resources, including steam, electricity, metals, or refuse-derived fuel and (2) achieves a volume reduction of at least 50% of its solid waste stream.

Maryland’s recycling policy is guided by the Maryland Recycling Act, which sets mandatory recycling rates for State government and local jurisdictions, as well as a voluntary statewide waste diversion goal of 60% and a voluntary statewide recycling goal of 55% by 2020. Each county (including Baltimore City) must prepare a recycling plan that addresses how the jurisdiction will achieve its mandatory recycling rate. The plan must be submitted to MDE’s Office of Recycling for approval when the jurisdiction submits its water and sewerage plan at least every 10 years. At least every 2 years, each county must also submit a progress report to MDE, which must include any revision of or amendment to the county plan that has been adopted.

The county recycling plan must address a variety of topics, including methods to reduce the solid waste stream; the feasibility of source separation of the solid waste stream generated within the county; and the strategy for the collection, processing, marketing, and disposition of recyclable materials. A county that achieves a reduction of at least 5% in the volume of its waste through the utilization of one or more resource recovery facilities (that were in operation as of January 1988) must be considered to have achieved a 5% credit toward its required recycling rate.

MDE’s Office of Recycling submits annual reports, in coordination with MES, to the Governor and the General Assembly on specified information related to recycling in Maryland. Beginning in 2009, MDE has combined the *Maryland Waste Diversion Activities Report* and the *Solid Waste Managed in Maryland Report* into one report, the *Maryland Solid Waste Management and Diversion Report*.

**Local Expenditures:** Most counties in the State do not use resource recovery facilities or incinerator ash recycling to meet MRA goals. Accordingly, local expenditures are likely not materially affected in most counties.

Based on recycling data from calendar 2018, however, local expenditures for Baltimore City and Baltimore and Montgomery counties may increase to (1) revise their county recycling plans to reflect the bill’s changes and (2) potentially revise their 10-year solid waste plans, as appropriate. To the extent that the required changes to these plans are relatively minor, and can be accomplished within a county’s normal update and review schedule, the increase in costs may be minimal. On the other hand, to the extent that county plans must be revised earlier than they otherwise would be, or involve more significant

changes, some of the affected counties may need to hire consultants, resulting in additional costs.

Costs may also increase in affected counties to meet MRA recycling rates and solid waste stream reduction requirements without the use of resource recovery facilities or recycling incinerator ash. However, a reliable estimate of any increase in costs cannot be made at this time.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** HB 179 of 2020 received an unfavorable report by the House Environment and Transportation Committee.

**Designated Cross File:** HB 280 (Delegate Charkoudian) - Environment and Transportation and Economic Matters.

**Information Source(s):** Anne Arundel, Baltimore, and Montgomery counties; Maryland Association of Counties; Northeast Maryland Waste Disposal Authority; Maryland Department of the Environment; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - January 19, 2021  
rh/lgc Third Reader - March 11, 2021

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