

# CHESAPEAKE PSR

## PHYSICIANS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



### **SB889 - Controlled Hazardous Substance Facility Permit - Research Facilities - Chemical Warfare Material Requirements – Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility OPPOSE**

The Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility (CPSR) is the state affiliate of the national Physicians for Social Responsibility, part of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War which received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1985. CPSR is a statewide organization of over 700 e-activist physicians, health professions and other supporters which relies on sound, evidenced based public health policy principally regarding prevention of nuclear war and strategies to mitigate climate crisis all through the lens of racial equity and social justice exposed by the pandemic.

We write to **OPPOSE** SB889 in the strongest possible terms. This bill seeks to amend existing law so as to exempt from current permitting requirements chemical warfare materials incineration at a Department of Defense “research facility” if the incineration is done for “research, development, or demonstration” purposes. People in Maryland successfully opposed the incineration of chemical weapons at Edgewood Arsenal/at Aberdeen Proving Ground back in the 1990’s. Located in a densely populated part of the State.

They demanded consideration of alternative ways to destroy this dangerous material that needed to be destroyed by international law. They were successful and the Army relented on incineration. Excellent scientists at Edgewood came up with a neutralization method that destroyed the weapons without incineration, without putting dangerous pollution into the air. Again in 2013 the brilliant scientists there won international praise for ridding the world of Syria’s deadly saran gas by neutralizing the material out at sea and without incineration.

Why we must ask is this bill being put forward that would allow incineration of chemical weapons in this state to resume without safety regulations?

We discussed this legislation with experts within our networks since the bill was introduced and, though they reached out to the sponsor, questions remain unanswered. This bill should not go forward until the Senate and the public has answers to these questions:

- What, in the Sponsor’s view, requires or necessitates this proposed change from the existing law?
- Which research facilities does the Sponsor envision would this amended version of the existing law be relevant to?
- Whether the Department of Defense has formally or informally requested a change in the state laws applicable to their chemical weapons research activities in the State of Maryland?

Our interests come from longstanding efforts relating to the safe and prompt destruction of chemical weapons by the United States and by all other countries as required under the 1997 Chemical Weapons Convention. We are deeply familiar with the U.S. chemical weapons demilitarization program and the role that current facilities, such as Aberdeen Proving Ground, have served in this process. Why is it necessary to pass a bill that exempts the incineration of chemical weapons incineration from environmental regulation?

This bill should not proceed without answers to senators and the public to the above questions. With these serious unanswered questions, and the potentially disastrous environmental consequences of incinerating chemical warfare materials in close proximity to residential areas, we strongly OPPOSE SB889 and ask for an UNFAVORABLE report.

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