



Committee: Environment and Transportation

Testimony on: SB253-Controlled Hazardous Substance Facility Permit – Research Facilities – Chemical Warfare Material Requirements

Position: Unfavorable

Hearing Date: March 26, 2025

*Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility (CPSR) is a statewide evidence-based organization of over 900 physicians and other health professionals and supporters that addresses existential public health threats: nuclear weapons, the climate crisis, and the issues of pollution and toxic effects on health, as seen through the intersectional lens of environmental, racial and social justice.*

Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility OPPOSES SB253. This bill seeks to amend existing law so as to exempt from current permitting requirements chemical warfare materials incinerated at a Department of Defense (DOD) “research facility” if the DOD states that 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.<sup>1</sup> 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 agreed to the neutralization rather than incineration after a national panel agreed that would be satisfactory for the waste at Aberdeen. That work was completed in 2006.<sup>2</sup> Scientists later used neutralization to rid the world of Syria’s deadly sarin gas out at sea and without incineration. The Army announced in 2023 that it had completed destruction of all chemical weapon stockpiles.<sup>3</sup>

This bill would allow incineration of lethal chemicals some of which are also carcinogenic,<sup>4</sup> without necessary safety regulations as long as it is labeled “for research” by the Department of Defense. Air monitoring would be in “near time” which could mean as much as 10 minutes after the incineration. Reports on quantities incinerated would be in yearly reports but not prospectively. Most concerning is that this bill **does not require “the development of an emergency preparedness plan** that allows adequate public participation that provides training, coordination, and equipment necessary for State and

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<sup>1</sup> . <https://www.baltimoresun.com/1994/02/06/panel-endorses-alternative-to-incinerator-at-aberdeen-2/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.peoacwa.army.mil/2024/10/10/facts-u-s-chemical-demilitarization-program-overview/>

<sup>3</sup> [s/Release/Article/3451920/us-completes-chemical-weapons-stockpile-destruction-operations/](https://www.release/article/3451920/us-completes-chemical-weapons-stockpile-destruction-operations/)

<sup>4</sup> <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2025RS/bills/hb/hb0062F.pdf>

local emergency response personnel and community members to respond to a release of a chemical warfare material from the proposed facility.”

**This bill does not include a requirement for emergency preparedness plan** which is a huge omission. Please protect your constituents and do not pass this bill. Do you really want your name associated with approval of this bill if something goes wrong which can happen where research is involved?

Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility urges you to vote not on SB253.

Respectfully submitted,

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