

February 24, 2025

HB1092 - The Recycling – Prohibition on the

Chemical Conversion of Plastic

COMMITTEE - Environment and Transportation

Testimony on HB1092

POSITION – FAVORABLE

Hearing Date – February 26, 2025

Dear members of the Environment and Transportation Committees,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 1092.

There is no doubt about the tremendous negative impacts associated with plastic products, from their production and harmful contents, to where even just a single piece of plastic winds up. It seems plastic never really goes away; it just goes elsewhere. Microplastics are even known to be in our bodies. Plastic or chemical recycling converts plastic to gas and liquid with a final by-product being vented to the atmosphere.

So, when we hear that there could be more “air pollutants” and greenhouse gases from plastic waste intentionally being added to the air and the environment, it’s very concerning. During this time of record-breaking heat and our state bearing witness to the impacts of climate change and global warming, it seems that any intentional increase in greenhouse gases and pollutants adding to this, would be very counterproductive, counterintuitive, and bad for the citizen’s health.

“Pellets” made from the various types of plastics used in plastic water bottles and other recyclables, meat trays, packaging, medical trash, PVC pipes, containers for fluids, coating for cables, Styrofoam peanuts, and egg cartons, just to name a few examples, would be used as the source for a chemical/plastic conversion process that would use combustion to convert these pellets into different forms of gas and liquid. Citizens are rightly concerned these projects could potentially have extremely negative consequences for the surrounding environment and people’s health. I want to remind everyone that we live in a state with high density in many places and we’re all downwind or upwind of each other, especially in central

Maryland. I was taught as a very small child that we should never burn plastic materials.

Pro Publica published an article that describes the toll that PFAS and other related chemicals have had on our bodies and in the environment.

<https://www.propublica.org/article/3m-forever-chemicals-pfas-pfos-inside-story>

These chemicals were produced for decades while research on their impact was performed, after they were created and sold. We must not allow anything like this to happen here.

Noted concerns regarding “Chemical recycling facilities” include “they emit highly toxic chemicals, including benzene, toluene, ethyl benzene, xylenes, and dioxins, many of which are linked to cancer, nervous system damage, and negative effects on reproduction and development”.

If passed, HB 1092 would protect Maryland from this process to begin with.

I have many additional concerns and questions about the process and these types of facilities that include-

If a multi-million-dollar corporation wants to perform chemical experiments and conversions, why do they have to do it here in heavily populated Maryland near tens of thousands of people and sources of drinking water?

Why not at a superfund site or a plastics manufacturer?

If we were to allow a facility to perform this process, who would monitor the activity to ensure this doesn't become a large-scale industrial program over time and who will measure the cumulative impacts on the environment and citizen's health over time?

Information provided on one proposed chemical conversion recycling “pilot” project that would convert plastic pellets to other materials says, “a final by-product will be vented to the atmosphere, and the separated condensed liquid will be collected and transferred daily, to 55-gal drums in the warehouse, and ultimately shipped to a 3rd party waste treatment facility”.

What size scale “pilot” project do they mean?

Is it just one 55-gallon drum, or 10 drums a day, or even more?

We've learned some of these products and processes are flammable and combustible. There have been explosions and fires, and one can only assume those included toxic releases into the atmosphere.

I'm concerned about where the plastic pellets would come from, and where the waste treatment facility for the 55-gallon drums of liquid would be located? How many loads of pellets, and 55-gallon drums a day, on small roads, with heavy trucks, in and out of a facility could there be in one day? Would the pellets come to Maryland by train, then be transferred to a truck for transport to the facility? Will this encourage the import of plastic pellets and trash to the region? How are the pellets packaged for transport?

What if the pellets being transported to the facility, or waste being hauled away is involved in an accident? Would a hazmat team be required for any clean up? How big are the pellets? Would the taxpayers pay for the clean-up? Are the by-products hazardous materials?

What environmental harms could be expected if this were to occur?

How would any of this be removed from a waterway?

Will there be any wastewater involved in any step of the process and if so, what is the process for its treatment and disposal?

I'm very concerned about emissions. Will the facility operators be responsible for providing the Emissions Point Data? Or will a state agency? What standard will be used for measuring and reporting the data?

I'm concerned that it could take MDE a very long time to shut a project down if it were determined to be a threat to human health and the environment. I'm concerned the impacts will be cumulative over time, therefore easier to dismiss in the present.

Due to the many questions, that we won't have the answers for in some cases until it may be much too late, like we've now learned about PFAS, and the known concerns about chemical conversion, I'm asking you to please vote in Favor of HB 1092.

Thank you for your consideration of our health and the environment.
Sharon Boies
Columbia, MD

