



Testimony Supporting HB438 / SB560
House Environment & Transportation Committee / Senate Finance Committee
February 20, 2020 / February 25, 2020

Position: SUPPORT

As a grassroots organization of residents and businesses working to help Ocean City become the first zero waste resort town in the United States, we urge you to support HB438/SB560 and remove trash incineration from Maryland's Renewable Portfolio Standard. Maryland should not be subsidizing trash incineration in the Renewable Portfolio Standard; burning trash is simply not a source of clean energy. We don't need it to generate electricity, and we don't need it to dispose of our waste. Our efforts and the work of similar organizations across the state demonstrate that Maryland can build alternatives to trash incineration that are better for both the economy and the environment.

Ocean City sees over 300,000 visitors on a nice summer weekend, and all of those people currently produce a lot of trash. Right now, Ocean City is shipping that trash to an incinerator in Chester, Pennsylvania, the largest trash incinerator in the country. That facility has an enormous detrimental impact on the surrounding community. PBS reported in 2017 that 38.5% of children in Chester have asthma; that's nearly five times the national average. A quarter of the town's adults also have asthma. Furthermore, Chester residents are significantly more likely to develop lung cancer and ovarian cancer and die from a stroke or heart disease than other residents of their county. We don't like that Ocean City's trash is contributing to this environmental injustice - and so we decided to do something about it.

Our Director of Compost Operations, Garvey Heiderman, is the owner of The Hobbit Restaurant. In 2018, we piloted a compost program there that collected almost 2,000 pounds of waste in four weeks. We were able to take over 50% of the waste produced by The Hobbit and divert it to be composted at a farm in Berlin. In 2019, we raised over \$8000 to support program growth and in 2020 we plan to build even further and process over 20,000 pounds of food waste produced by The Hobbit. Restaurant composting can quickly and efficiently get enormous amounts of food scraps out of the waste stream, and onto farms where it benefits the farmer. Compost can bring back cropland that has been desolate and drained of nutrients for years. From our coastal point of view it is phenomenal for preventing runoff from leeching into the groundwater and into the watershed, helping to protect our local quality and the Chesapeake Bay.

But not all waste can be composted - so in the fall of 2019, we sponsored the first zero-waste event in Ocean City with OC Bikefest, one of the nation's largest motorcycle festivals. Our members and volunteers worked hard to educate festival goers about recycling and to keep recyclable materials out of the trash cans, and by the end of the event, we had collected over 26,000 cans to be recycled: enough to fill a 30-foot-long moving truck! When OC Bikefest comes back in 2020, we plan to eliminate all plastics at the festival and reduce the event's waste by 65%.

Through scaling up these zero waste programs, we plan to save Ocean City money. Covanta charges nearly \$70 per ton to take our waste and burn it at the Chester trash incinerator. We hope to be able to scale composting up to the point where we can do it for substantially less and in turn save the town money. It will also have a positive impact on the town's image enhancing their green efforts - who wouldn't want to come to the first zero waste resort town in the United States? We also want to create local jobs through zero waste in Ocean City. In 2010, Ocean City decided to eliminate recycling pickup, and 20 local residents lost their jobs in that sector. By composting, we plan to create 10-15 local jobs. Studies show that on a per-ton basis, composting employs 2x more workers than landfills and 4x more than incinerators. We want those jobs to benefit Eastern Shore residents and improve our economy and environment.

Continuing to subsidize trash incineration is counterproductive to this goal. Maryland doesn't need to throw our renewable energy money away on burning trash. The alternatives to trash incineration are better for our communities in every way, and groups like ours across the state are making it happen. Please support HB438/SB560 so that these subsidies won't stand in the way of building a better zero waste future.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joshua Chamberlain', written in a cursive style.

Joshua Chamberlain

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