



Bill No. HB-438  
Name: Peter Alexander, PhD  
Position: Favorable  
RE: Testimony before the House Economic Matters Committee  
Date: February 20, 2020

Mr. Chairman, Madame Vice Chair, and members of the Committee,

My name is Peter Alexander and I represent the 700+ members of Indivisible Howard County MD. I am writing in support of HB-438, Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard - Eligible Sources, which removes trash incineration from Maryland's Renewable Energy Portfolio.

Burning trash is not clean energy and shouldn't qualify for RPS subsidies which are intended for energy sources such as wind and solar. Trash incineration currently receives the same subsidies as these truly clean energy sources. The fact that trash incineration receives any utility rate payer-funded subsidies is a misappropriation of those utility bill dollars.

To produce the same amount of energy, trash incinerators emit more greenhouse gasses than coal plants do (1). Air pollutants from waste incinerators have also been shown to increase the risk of pre-term births, and lung and blood cancers (2). An Environmental Integrity Project assessment shows that Maryland's incinerators emit higher levels of mercury, lead, nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, and carbon dioxide than our coal plants per kilowatt of energy produced (3). A Chesapeake Bay Foundation study found that Baltimore City's trash incinerator emits particulate matter that creates adverse health effects that cost people in our region over \$55 million every year (4).

Burning and burying our waste are not the only options. Recycling, composting, re-use, and source reduction can eliminate the need to burn or bury so much waste. Composting is a sustainable

alternative to landfills and incinerators, with many benefits to air and water quality, soil health, local business development, and fighting climate change.

A waste characterization study by Prince George's County found that 77% of its landfilled waste could be composted, recycled or diverted (5). The county has adopted successful zero waste strategies that have extended the life of the county's landfill and the county is now home to the East Coast's largest municipal composting facility, a profitable revenue stream for the county.

Last year, the Frederick County Compost Workgroup launched a pilot program to work with students in three county schools to divert their waste for composting (6). This year, they've expanded to 14 schools. In a waste separation study at Urbana Sugarloaf Elementary School, they found that 87% of the school's trash could be diverted from the landfill (7).

Composting Maryland's organic waste could reduce our waste stream while creating exciting opportunities for local business development. As an added benefit, compost sequesters carbon and builds healthy soils. Composting even creates jobs: composting a ton of waste in Maryland employs twice as many people as landfilling it, and four times as many people as incinerating it.

Let's stop subsidizing trash incineration as a so-called clean energy source and use those subsidies to support truly clean energy sources while developing viable alternatives for diverting waste from our landfill.

We urge a favorable report.

## References

- (1) <http://www.energyjustice.net/incineration/climate>
- (2) Tait, et. al., (2020). The health impacts of waste incineration: a systematic review. Australian New Zealand J. Publ. Health. **44**(1):40.48.
- (3) EIP Report: Waste-to-Energy Incinerators Pollute More Per of Hour of Energy than Coal-Fired Power Plants and Are Not Renewable; Oct 2011.
- (4) Thurston, G.D. (2017). Written Report of George D. Thurston Regarding the Public Health Impacts of Air Emissions from the Wheelabrator Facility.
- (5) SCS ENGINEERS (2016). Waste Characterization Study Summary of Results 2014/2015, File No. 02201056.95. June 2016.
- (6) <https://frederickcountymd.gov/1739/Composting>
- (7) [https://www.fredericknewspost.com/news/education/schools/public\\_k-12/elementary/food-waste-biggest-hurdle-still-to-come-as-fcps-expands/article\\_a6d398f5-0bee-54bf-9524-254e6f4331e5.html](https://www.fredericknewspost.com/news/education/schools/public_k-12/elementary/food-waste-biggest-hurdle-still-to-come-as-fcps-expands/article_a6d398f5-0bee-54bf-9524-254e6f4331e5.html)