



**HB179: Maryland Recycling Act - Recyclable Materials and Resource Recovery Facilities - Alterations**  
**Environment and Transportation Committee Hearing**  
**February 11th, 2020**

**FAVORABLE**

*Environment Maryland is a citizen-based environmental advocacy organization. We work to protect clean air, clean water, and open space.*

*Maryland PIRG is a state based, non-partisan, citizen funded public interest advocacy organization with grassroots members across the state and a student funded, student directed chapter at the University of Maryland College Park. For forty five years we've stood up to powerful interests whenever they threaten our health and safety, our financial security, or our right to fully participate in our democratic society. **That includes a long history of working to promote recycling and put Maryland on the path to zero waste.***

While Maryland ranks higher than some states in recycling, the majority of our waste is still sent to landfills or incinerators, and less than half is recycled or composted. We need to take decisive steps to address our growing waste crisis, and move towards zero waste; however, without a proper accounting of what is being trashed and recycled in the state it is hard to set and follow through with this vision.

By removing incineration and incinerator ash from our calculus we can more honestly confront the challenges our state faces when addressing our waste crisis and create a more realistic and visionary response.

HB179 will help us achieve a more accurate accounting and measurement of waste reduction and recycling. It will

1. Remove incineration ash from being considered a recyclable material towards a counties recycling goal and report to the Maryland Department of the Environment under the Maryland Recycling Act.
2. Remove the 5% waste diversion credit for an incinerator built before 1988.

Neither incinerator ash, nor incineration should count towards our recycling rates nor diversion credits in Maryland, and removing them from the formulas will more accurately reflect our state's recycling rate.

Incinerator ash is a toxic byproduct for trash incineration. It contains heavy metals and toxic compounds like dioxins. It is often used as cover on landfills, where these pollutants can leach out into groundwater and rivers. This "disposal" should not be incentivised by counting it towards our recycling goals. As long as we have incinerators, we will have toxic ash, and we should acknowledge the role it plays in our waste stream.

Likewise, the outdated diversion credit for incineration is misguided in 2020. The public health impacts of incineration are vast, and most agree it would be far better to compost and recycle waste than incinerate it. While incineration may be in the mix short term, we should not give diversion credits for it.

Thank you for your attention on this issue, and service to the state. We respectfully request a favorable report.