

Maryland-Delaware Solid Waste Association

a chapter of the

**National
Waste & Recycling
Association**
Collect. Recycle. Innovate.

TO: The Honorable Kumar P. Barve, Chair
Members, House Environment and Transportation Committee
The Honorable Vaughn Stewart

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
J. Steven Wise
Danna L. Kauffman
Richard A. Tabuteau

DATE: February 19, 2020

RE: **OPPOSE** – House Bill 517 – *Constitutional Amendment – Right to Healthy Environment and Communities*

The Maryland Delaware Solid Waste Association (MDSWA), a chapter of the National Waste and Recycling Association, is a trade association representing the private solid waste industry in the State of Maryland. Its membership includes hauling and collection companies, processing and recycling facilities, transfer stations, and disposal facilities. MDSWA and its members **oppose** House Bill 517.

House Bill 517 proposes a Constitutional Amendment which would establish that every “person” has the right to clean air, pure water, healthy communities, an environment free of conditions that degrade public health or natural resources, and the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic, and aesthetic values of the environment. While the Amendment reflects notable aspirational goals that would appeal to most individuals, the Amendment if adopted would dramatically expand Maryland’s current legal standing framework.

Standing means that a party has a sufficient stake in a controversy to be able to obtain judicial resolution of that controversy. Under current Maryland law, to show standing, an individual generally must demonstrate that the person has experienced an adverse effect from the law or action in question and the adverse effect will continue unless the court grants relief. In contrast, this Constitutional Amendment would essentially provide standing to all individuals to intervene in virtually any action related to protecting the rights established by the bill, whether or not the individual is impacted by the action.

Given the challenges already faced by local jurisdictions and private sector interests in the development of critical solid waste disposal, processing and recycling facilities, the enactment of the proposed Constitutional Amendment will create major regulatory uncertainty and litigation risk for both new project development and the expansion or modification of existing facilities. Maryland did a comprehensive review and modification of its standing requirements in 2009. The legislation had the

strong buy-in of both the environmental and business community given its fair balance of rights and responsibilities.

Maryland has struggled to get its solid waste and recycling infrastructure established, especially for facilities such as landfills and composting facilities. A number of critical workgroups have formed to address the current challenges. Should standing be broadened to the extent reflected in the Constitutional Amendment, it will be virtually impossible to develop essential solid waste management and recycling facilities as they will undoubtedly be challenged by some individual who asserts standing given the perceived negative impacts of the project. Measures like this Constitutional Amendment will create major regulatory uncertainty and litigation risk not just for the solid waste industry but for any use that affects the environment. NWRA strongly urges an unfavorable report.

For more information call:

Pamela Metz Kasemeyer

J. Steven Wise

Danna L. Kauffman

Richard A. Tabuteau

410-244-7000