CLEAN WATER ACTION
MARYLAND

# Stop Incentivizing Trash Incineration


Burning trash is not clean energy: to produce the same amount of energy, trash incinerators emit more greenhouse gasses than coal plants do. Air pollutants from waste incinerators have also been shown to increase the risk of pre-term births, and lung and blood cancers; 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 energy produced. A Chesapeake Bay Foundation study determined that Baltimore City's trash incinerator creates adverse health effects that cost people in our region over $55 million every year – just with its particulate matter alone.

But in 2011, Maryland added trash incineration to Tier 1 of the Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) - a program meant to support clean energy sources and facilitate a transition away from fossil fuels. Tier 1 status means burning trash gets the same subsidies as solar and wind power, which the RPS program was designed to support. Since then, the BRESCO trash incinerator in Baltimore has received over $10 million in subsidies, along with trash incinerators in Montgomery County and Lorton, VA – all money that comes from Marylanders' utility bills. Maryland counties can also receive credit in their recycling rates for incinerating trash, providing an extra incentive for trash incineration that displaces actually recycling materials.

## HB0438/SB0560

Removes trash incineration from Maryland's Renewable Portfolio Standard.

## HB0179

Stops trash incineration and incinerator ash from inflating recycling rates.


*www.cleanwater.org/ZeroWasteMD*

1120 N Charles St, Suite 415 | Baltimore, MD 21201 | 410-235-8808
**www.cleanwateraction.org/md**

CLEAN WATER ACTION
MARYLAND

# Start Supporting Composting

Burning and burying our waste are not the only options. All across Maryland, local governments, communities, and groups are working towards a future where 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.

**Prince George's County** considered building a municipal trash incinerator, but instead adopted zero waste strategies that were so successful, they extended the life of the county's landfill by many years. A waste characterization study found that 77% of its landfilled waste could be composed, recycled or diverted. Now, the county is home to the East Coast's largest municipal composting facility, a profitable revenue stream for the county.

**Frederick and Carroll County** entered into agreements to build a new trash incinerator a decade ago, but ultimately rejected that idea, and the proposed incinerator was never built. Last year, the Frederick County Compost Workgroup launched a pilot program to work with students in 3 county schools to divert their waste for composting; 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 – see above for how.

**Urbana Sugarloaf Elementary School**
**Waste Separation Data for First 15 days & Extrapolated for Full School Year**

| BEFORE SORT | First 15 Days | Percent | All lunches per year (180 days) | Where it goes! |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| TRASH | 3,047.7 lbs. | 100% | 36,572 lbs. | Landfilled |
| **AFTER SORT** | | | | |
| Liquids | 752.2 lbs. | 24.7% | 9,026 lbs. | Poured down drain |
| Compostable Food Waste | 1,635.0 lbs | 53.6% | 19,620 lbs. | Composted by Key Compost |
| Recyclables | 289.5 lbs. | 9.5% | 3,474 lbs. | Recycled |
| TRASH | 370.5 lbs. | 12.2% | 4,446 lbs. | Landfilled |

**Landfilled Trash Reduced by 87.8 Percent!**

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. And there is room for the sector to grow.

## HB0589

Phases in an organic waste diversion requirement for large food waste producers in areas where compost facilities are available, creating business opportunities for composting across Maryland.

*www.cleanwater.org/ZeroWasteMD*

1120 N Charles St, Suite 415 | Baltimore, MD 21201 | 410-235-8808
**www.cleanwateraction.org/md**