



Olivia Bartlett, Co-Lead, DoTheMostGood Maryland Team

Committee: Environment and Transportation

Testimony on: HB0021 – Environment – Recycling – Prohibition on the Chemical Conversion of Plastic

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: January 29, 2021

Bill Contacts: Delegate Love

DoTheMostGood (DTMG) is a progressive grass-roots organization with more than 2500 members who live in a wide range of communities in Montgomery and Frederick Counties, from Bethesda near the DC line north to Frederick and from Poolesville east to Silver Spring and Olney. DTMG supports legislation and activities that keep all the members of our communities healthy and safe in a clean environment. DTMG strongly supports HB0021 because chemical conversion of plastic will actually make the climate and plastic pollution problems worse, and facilities that do this have no place in Maryland.

In the past few years, chemists at Purdue University and elsewhere have devised new chemical procedures to apply heat, chemicals, and high voltage electricity to turn plastics into back into some form of oil. The chemical and plastics industries have branded these chemical conversion processes “advanced recycling”, “chemical recycling” or “chemical conversion” to greenwash a polluting and carbon intensive process. About 50% of the carbon content of waste plastics is typically lost during the chemical conversion as greenhouse gases, which contribute to climate change. Chemical conversion facilities also release toxic chemicals, including lead, arsenic, mercury, bisphenol-A, cadmium, benzene, and volatile organic compounds, into the atmosphere and have a resulting ash that is also full of toxins. The plastics industry has not released any peer reviewed information documenting the environmental impacts of the entire lifecycle for the chemical conversion process.

Furthermore, there is no evidence that these plants will reduce the use of single use plastics or solve the recycling problem. It’s not recycling at all. On the contrary, chemical conversion will just feed the demand for continued use of disposable plastics to benefit the petrochemical industry.

HB0021 directly addresses this by defining that in Maryland, “recycling” does not include chemical conversion processes such as pyrolysis, hydrolysis, methanolysis, gasification, enzymatic breakdown, or similar processes. In addition, HB0021 will prohibit building facilities for these processes in Maryland. Such facilities would just give the oil and plastic industries a green light to light to keep producing plastics at a time when we must stop extracting fossil fuels and stop burning oil of all kinds in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and rein in global warming.

In addition, prohibiting new chemical conversion facilities in Maryland also addresses equity and environmental justice. 79% of waste to energy facilities are located in low-income communities and communities of color which are already impacted by excessive air and water pollution. These facilities expose residents to harmful particulates that cause cancer, respiratory illnesses, and neurological disorders. Maryland does not need any more facilities that release toxins into the air.

Therefore, DTMG strongly supports HB0021 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report on this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

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