



Environment Committee

Committee: Environment & Transportation
Testimony on: HB0280-- “Maryland Recycling Act--Recyclable Materials and Resource Recovery Facilities--Alterations”
Organization: Takoma Park Mobilization Environment Committee
Person
Submitting: Diana Younts, co-chair
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: February 9, 2021

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for allowing our testimony today in support of HB0280. Takoma Park Mobilization Environment Committee is a grassroots organization focused on passing climate legislation at the state and county level.

We urge you to support HB0280, a bill that excludes incinerator ash as “recyclable materials” under the Maryland Recycling Act (MRA). The bill also repeals the authority of a county to rely on trash incinerator ash to help meet its state-mandated waste reduction targets as part of its recycling plan. Incinerator ash is the leftover material resulting from the burning of municipal solid waste. The MRA currently allows ash that’s incorporated into cement blocks to count towards the MRA rate reported by local governments.

HB0280 Complements Montgomery County’s Zero Waste Plan: The foundation of Montgomery County’s zero waste plan requires an honest accounting of what the county is recycling. Counting incineration ash as recycling masks waste (and toxic waste at that) as recycling undermines Montgomery County’s zero waste goals. Further, incinerators burn many recyclable materials (metals and food waste, for example) that could be separated, composted, or processed, and then subsequently marketed as raw materials or products. The Zero Waste International Alliance considers discarded material to be a resource for “reuse, and recovery of products, packaging, and materials without burning and with no discharges to land, water, or air that threaten the environment or human health.” Incinerator ash is a product that will never be part of a sustainable cycle and should not be considered “recyclable.”

HB0280 Complements Montgomery County’s Climate Action Plan: Montgomery County has resolved to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2027 and 100% by 2035. Trash incinerators emit climate-disrupting greenhouse gases which damage our climate, and other pollutants which damage Marylanders’ health. The incinerator at Dickerson is Montgomery

County's largest single source of pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions. Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) and dioxin are common contaminants created when waste is incinerated; incentivizing "recycling" of incinerator ash encourages the persistence of these toxins in the environment, endangering human and animal life. Trash incinerators are expensive, polluting, and an appalling waste of resources. Our trash should be redirected to create jobs by growing recycling markets and creating circular economies. Eliminating incinerator ash from the MRA list of "recyclable materials" is a first step in the right direction.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable vote for HB0280.