

**HB217: Task Force on Recycling Policy and Recycling and Waste Systems in Maryland**  
House Environment and Transportation Committee  
February 2, 2022

**Position: Favorable With Amendments**

Dear Chairman Barve and Members of the Committee,

The undersigned 10 organizations support HB217 and encourage the Committee to adopt amendments that will equip the Task Force to make the best recommendations to the Committee. We thank Delegates Love and Ruth for bringing this legislation forward to improve waste recycling, diversion, and disposal in Maryland.

The Maryland Recycling Act passed in 1988, more than three decades ago, and at the time only mandated a recycling rate of 15% for counties with a population less than 150,000 and 20% for counties with a population greater than 150,000. Over time, these recycling requirements have increased, and the legislature has made other improvements to the Maryland Recycling Act such as ensuring that the use of toxic incinerator ash cannot count toward the recycling rate. However, the Maryland Recycling Act is due for an update to ensure that it is serving to increase recycling, diversion, and prevention of waste, critical tools for extending the life of Maryland's landfills, using Maryland taxpayers' money wisely, and reducing both local air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

We also support the task force's mandate to study the feasibility of implementing regional recycling and waste disposal facilities, but encourage the Committee to make a few changes to equip the Task Force to meet the needs it must address.

**Add Needs Assessment of waste diversion needs across Maryland**

Although every county in Maryland is likely in need of more recycling and waste diversion infrastructure, it is important that recommendations for locating new facilities be based on the particular needs of each county and region of the state, since each county has a different landscape of existing waste disposal regulations, facilities, and practices. Local, small-scale infrastructure can be the most beneficial, both in terms of cost and in terms of decreased roadway emissions from trucking, and considering the needs in each part of the state will help the Task Force identify the most cost-effective recommendations for new facilities.

**Add composting and waste diversion to feasibility study**

We encourage that the committee make recommendations on "the feasibility of implementing regional recycling, *composting*, *waste diversion*, and waste disposal facilities." Composting is one of the lowest-cost, highest-impact means of reducing waste volume and greenhouse gas emissions from landfills, and Maryland is in dire need of increased composting capacity. Waste diversion is also a key part of reducing our waste stream, and developing facilities that help

people repair faulty devices and divert usable materials for reuse before they go to disposal. [Urban Ore](#) in Berkeley, California, or [EcoCycle](#) in Boulder, Colorado, are excellent examples of such facilities. Evaluation by this Task Force could help such valuable facilities move forward in Maryland.

### **Define Zero Waste**

The [Zero Waste International Alliance's definition of zero waste](#) is the only peer-reviewed, internationally-accepted definition: "*The conservation of all resources by means of responsible production, consumption, 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.*" This should be amended into the bill as the definition of zero waste to make it clear that the Task Force must not encourage the siting of new incinerators, chemical recycling plants, or other polluting methods of waste disposal.

This is critically important because many such polluting industries, particularly those that produce energy from waste, falsely brand themselves as part of Zero Waste; for example, Covanta, the company that operates Montgomery County's incinerator, promotes trash incineration as part of a "[Zero-Waste-To-Landfill](#)" hierarchy - incompatible with the internationally-accepted definition of zero waste. In contrast, the Montgomery County government recently cited the Zero Waste International Alliance's definition; please see the attached memo from December 2021 about the County's plan to close the incinerator in Dickerson stating: "*We will use the international definition of Zero Waste and the Zero Waste Hierarchy as our guide to rethink, redesign, and reduce material consumption in Montgomery County, and to seek the highest and best use of discarded materials.*" This legislation should similarly clarify that the Task Force will use the Zero Waste International Alliance's definition of zero waste and Zero Waste Hierarchy to evaluate potential facilities, and avoid recommending incinerators and other facilities incompatible with that definition.

We appreciate Delegates Ruth and Love for bringing forward this important bill to update the Maryland Recycling Act. We urge the Committee to pass HB217 with these amendments to ensure that the Task Force is prepared to make the best recommendations for waste recycling, composting, reuse, and disposal in Maryland.

Sincerely,

### **Clean Water Action**

Jennifer Kunze, Maryland Coordinator

### **Maryland Catholics for our Common Home**

Steven Cleghorn, Member

### **Echotopia**

Diane Wittner, Principal

**Locust Point Community Garden**

Dave Arndt, Director

**Sugarloaf Citizens' Association**

Lauren Greenberger, Vice President

**Zero Waste Montgomery County**

Deborah Cohn, Member

**Frederick Zero Waste Alliance**

Patrice Gallagher, Board President

**Cedar Lane UU Church Environmental Justice Team**

Kathleen Holmay, Team Leader

**Indivisible Howard County**

Barbara Matheson, Climate Action Team Co-Facilitator

**HoCo Climate Action**

Liz Feighner, Steering Committee