HB 1021– Products That Contain Mercury - Fluorescent Lamps - Prohibition

Testimony before the Economic Matters Committee

March 8, 2023

Position: Favorable

Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby, and members of the committee, my name is Barbara Matheson, and I represent the 750+ members of Indivisible Howard County. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members). We are providing written testimony in ***support of HB1021***. We applaud the leadership being shown by the committee and Sponsor Terrasa in transitioning away from toxic mercury-based light sources in favor of clean, efficient and cost-effective LED technology,

Mercury has long been recognized as a potent and persistent neurotoxin that threatens human health and the environment. Improper disposal of mercury-containing products in landfills eventually reaches our rivers, lakes, oceans, and the Chesapeake Bay where it bioaccumulates in fish and shellfish. **Consumption of contaminated seafood is the leading cause of human exposure to mercury.**

In 2021 the European Union banned the sale of almost all mercury-containing fluorescent lamps. The states of Vermont and California have banned fluorescents. California's new law will cut energy bills in half and protect the state from rolling blackouts caused by electricity shortages. California could save over $1 billion annually on electricity bills, achieve annual electricity savings of about 5,600 gigawatt hours, and avoid the release of 950,000 metric tons of CO2 per year.

Research by American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy https://www.aceee.org/press-release/2022/03/study-mercury-laced-fluorescent-bulbs-should-be-phased-out-leds-now-more provides the following key findings:

• Mercury-free LED replacements are widely available and provide the same or better lighting service, longer product life, and much lower total cost.

• In the United States rapidly phasing out most fluorescent lighting would prevent lamps containing 16,000 pounds of mercury from being sold and installed through 2050, reducing a substantial source of mercury pollution in our air and soil.

• Electricity savings from a complete transition to LED lighting in the United States would cut annual carbon dioxide emissions in 2030 by 18 million metric tons, an amount equal to the annual emissions of four million typical passenger cars. On a cumulative basis, a phaseout would cut carbon dioxide emissions by more than 200 million metric tons through 2050.

• The modest additional cost of LED lamps is paid back quickly in lower utility bills. For businesses, where most linear fluorescent lamps are used, the payback period for the most common lamps is less than two months. For households, it is about a year, which is well within the products' useful life.

HB1201 will result in even more efficient energy use in our homes and businesses, reduced electricity bills, as well as reductions in both carbon and toxic pollution. We strongly encourage a favorable report.

Barbara Matheson
Columbia, MD