

February 8, 2023

Testimony on HB 161

Northeast Maryland Waste Disposal Authority – Evaluation and Termination of Bond Authority (Northeast Maryland Waste Disposal Authority Sunset Act)

Environment and Transportation

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland is in support of HB 161, which would task the Department of Legislative Services with evaluating the Northeast Maryland Waste Disposal Authority, in an effort to improve efficiency and eliminate redundancies across similar quasi-governmental agencies. Today, every service provided by the Authority – with the exception of waste-to-energy trash incineration – is provided by another quasi-governmental agency. As trash incineration becomes increasingly obsolete in Maryland, it follows that continuing to pour resources and taxpayer dollars into the Authority that manages the practice would be futile.

Any given quasi-governmental entity is established with a purpose – to support the government in efficiently and effectively providing a service to the public. In this case, we must ask ourselves whether the Northeast Maryland Waste Disposal Authority meets this standard. Putting aside the clear organizational inefficiencies and redundancies, it is imperative to assess whether or not the Authority is providing a service that actually benefits the public. The negative health impacts – both human and environmental - of trash incineration are well established. The Environmental Integrity Project reported that trash incineration facilities emit significantly more greenhouse gases and harmful air toxins than coal plants. Surrounding communities face increased risks of cancer, respiratory disease, and even birth defects and miscarriages. Additionally, waste-to-energy facilities are routinely placed in low-income, communities of color where residents *already* face significant barriers to accessing healthcare and other critical services.

Because of these established consequences, every Maryland county that operates waste-to-energy trash incineration has either closed or committed to closing their facilities. Why then, would Marylanders need an agency to manage a practice that is already being phased out? Passing HB 161 is not only critical in pursuing the efficiency of Maryland's public services, but critical in affirming that the health and wellbeing of all Marylanders is a priority.

We strongly urge a favorable report.