



February 22, 2024

To: Maryland Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Re: SB532 Commission to Advance Lithium-Ion Battery Safety In Maryland

The Maryland Recycling Network promotes sustainable reduction, reuse and recycling (the 3 "R's"), to ensure that the use of virgin materials is minimized, materials otherwise destined for disposal are reused or recycled and strong demand exists for buying products made with recycled material content. We achieve these goals through education programs, advocacy activities to affect public policy, technical assistance efforts, and the development of markets to purchase recycled materials and manufacture products with recycled content.

Our members are county and municipal government recycling managers, private sector recyclers, non-profit recyclers and citizens who support recycling. We have direct experience operating recycling and composting programs at the county and municipal government level. We know the ins and outs of recycling in Maryland. Our experience informs our comments.

The Maryland Recycling Network supports SB532, Commission to Advance Lithium-Ion Battery Safety in Maryland.

Lithium-ion batteries are found in a variety of electronic products including hearing aids, cell phones, e-bikes, scooters, laptops, tablets and vaping devices. When punctured, a chemical reaction can cause a fire or explosion. Chemical reactions during the fire make them burn longer and hotter. They are difficult to stop.

Unfortunately, people put these batteries in their recycling bins and the garbage. A recent National Solid Waste & Recycling Association (NWRA) [report](#) estimates more than 5,000 fires a year at recycling and waste facilities and in collection trucks. While many recycling processing facility fires can be quickly contained, several facilities have been damaged so badly they had to be closed and rebuilt. The loss to the facility owner can be more than \$50 million dollars. In addition, local recycling programs relying on those facilities are forced to scramble to find new processing facilities for their recyclables.

A survey of our members turned up reports of fires on tipping floors at recycling processing facilities, fires in trash collection trucks, and fires at waste transfer stations and landfills. Fortunately, none of these events caused serious damage. However, a 2022 fire at a recycling processing facility in York, Pennsylvania, which is used by some Maryland communities, caused it to shut down.

The proposed task force gives Maryland a chance to investigate this issue. The task force can make recommendations to ensure that these batteries, so essential to so many products, can continue to be useful without causing continued fire problems.

The waste and recycling industry has released a [guide](#) to best management practices regarding lithium-ion batteries. But the best guide is keeping them out of the recycling stream and the trash. After all, the

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most effective education and enforcement efforts to improve our recycling programs come to naught if the collection truck or processing facility burns down.

The Maryland Recycling Network stands ready to serve as a sounding board and resource for legislators and others interested in pursuing our mission. Please do not hesitate to contact me via email phoustle@marylandrecyclingnetwork.org, phone 301-725-2508 or mail - MRN, PO Box 1640, Columbia MD 21044 if you have any questions or would like additional information regarding the above.

We look forward to working with you to improve Maryland's recycling programs and thank you for your consideration and support.

Sincerely,



Peter M. Houste
Executive Director
Maryland Recycling Network