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**National Waste  
& Recycling Association**<sup>SM</sup>

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
February 24, 2026

Senate Bill 553 – *Commission to Advance Lithium-Ion Battery Safety in Maryland – Reestablishment*

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

The Maryland chapter of the National Waste and Recycling Association (NWRA-MD) is a trade association representing the private solid waste industry in the State of Maryland. Its membership includes hauling and collection companies, processing and recycling facilities, transfer stations, and disposal facilities. NWRA-MD and its members **support** Senate Bill 553.

Senate Bill 553 reestablishes the Commission to Advance Lithium-Ion Battery Safety in Maryland with an updated membership, including representatives from industry, government, first responders, insurers, and recycling stakeholders.

The problem of lithium-ion battery fires in waste and recycling facilities has become a major safety and operational challenge for the industry. As these batteries are used in an ever-wider array of consumer devices, from phones and laptops to e-bikes and vape pens, many end up improperly discarded in regular recycling and trash streams, where sorting equipment can crush or damage them and trigger fires. Industry reporting and research estimate that more than 5,000 fires occur annually at recycling facilities alone, with an average of around 18 fires per materials recovery facility (MRF) each year, and that MRFs are frequently the hardest-hit segment of the waste system. Publicly documented waste and recycling facility fires in the U.S. and Canada grew to record levels in recent years, with hundreds of incidents reported annually, and many more likely going unreported. These fires not only pose serious risks to workers and emergency responders but also cause costly disruptions, destroy equipment, and increase insurance and operating costs for facilities.

NWRA has been actively working to reduce lithium-ion battery fires in the waste and recycling system by focusing on industry guidance, partnerships, and public education. NWRA has joined with organizations, such as the Recycled Materials Association and the Solid Waste Association of North America to release practical guides that help MRFs identify, handle, and manage lithium-ion batteries safely as they enter recycling streams, with recommendations on operations, employee training, storage, and emergency response to minimize fire risks. The Association also issues joint policy statements and supports take-back programs and proper disposal practices to keep batteries out of curbside waste where they can ignite, while planning national public awareness campaigns to educate consumers about safe battery disposal and collection options.

The report issued by the Commission in November 2025 provided Maryland with the first comprehensive examination of lithium-ion battery risks, including consumer use, transportation, utilities, and recycling. That report identified gaps in current practices and offered thoughtful recommendations for improving safety and informing public policy.

NWRA-MD supports continuing to bring all impacted stakeholders together to examine this issue and make recommendations on how to address it. Additionally, NWRA-MD thanks the bill sponsors for including us on the task force and requests a favorable report for Senate Bill 553.

**For more information:**

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