

February 16, 2026

HB517 – The Emission Standards, Ambient Air Quality Standards, And Solid Waste Management -Local Authority Bill

Position -Favorable

Dear Chairman Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in favor of HB517, the Emission Standards, Ambient Air Quality Standards, And Solid Waste Management-Local Authority Bill.

Serious concerns have been raised regarding the environmental and health impacts of pyrolysis, particularly as it relates to plastic processing. While marketed as "chemical recycling," pyrolysis is an energy-intensive process that emits toxic pollutants such as dioxins, benzene, and heavy metals. These emissions often exceed the greenhouse gas output from making plastic from crude oil (1). Permitting pyrolysis facilities could undermine Maryland's climate goals during a period of record-breaking heat, environmental stress, and rollbacks of federal environmental regulations.

Of particular concern is the impact on our air quality and waterways. Pyrolysis generates toxic ash and wastewater that can contaminate groundwater and drinking water sources (2). In Howard County, a proposed pyrolysis project is sited adjacent to a residential neighborhood and a protected environmental area that buffers the Middle Patuxent River—a critical headwater source of drinking water.

Furthermore, NASA air pollution monitoring tools indicate that Howard County already has some of the most polluted air in Maryland (3). Adding intentional emissions of hazardous air pollutants is counterproductive to our climate goals and detrimental to public health.

It is imperative that local authorities be granted the authorization for more stringent oversight of waste management, local recycling programs, or business practices that may negatively impact air and water quality.

Authorization for infrastructure such as water and sewer permits should not preclude local oversight of air quality.

Additionally: Local Authorities should always have access to the following:

- TRI Reporting: Local Authorities should be authorized to request current Toxic Release Inventory (TRI) data, which should include all data regardless of thresholds, including dioxins and mercury which have lower reporting triggers. Reportable data should include the amounts

of chemicals released to air, water, or soil—including fugitive emissions from leaks and vents, and other air releases—and quantities managed through recycling, treatment or disposal.

- Results of all internal studies related to health, air, soil, or water quality.

Local Authorities must have the ability to determine the cumulative impacts of these emissions on human health. Furthermore, the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) and Local Authorities must have clear authority to shut down projects that threaten public safety.

Maryland should allow local municipalities to strengthen their laws and review the zoning processes that allow experimental pyrolysis facilities to operate near neighborhoods and clean water sources.

I urge a favorable report on HB517. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sharon Boies  
Protect Our Streams

#### RESOURCES-

(1) <https://www.propublica.org/article/delusion-advanced-chemical-plastic-recycling-pyrolysis#:~:text=Half%20of%20all%20U.S.%20states%20have%20eased,gases%20than%20making%20plastic%20from%20crude%20oil>

(2) <https://www.clf.org/blog/burning-waste-bad-idea/#:~:text=No%20Matter%20What%20You%20Call,plus%20heavy%20metals%20and%20dioxins>

(3) <https://www.nasa.gov/news-release/nasa-shares-first-images-from-us->