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Government, Labor, and  
Elections Committee

*Subcommittees*

Election Law

Labor

Oversight Committee on Personnel



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 25, 2026

To: The Honorable Marc A. Korman Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee

From: Delegate Jen Terrasa District 13, Howard County

Re: Sponsor Testimony in Support of HB 796 – Recycling - Prohibition on the Chemical Conversion of Plastic

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

Thank you for the opportunity to present HB 796, which prohibits chemical recycling in Maryland. It is a reintroduction of last year's bill, HB 1092.

Chemical recycling, also known as "advanced recycling" or "chemical conversion," is marketed as a solution to the plastic crisis but is actually a polluting process with significant risk to our health and the environment. The process involves using heat and/or solvents to break down plastics into monomers (the building blocks of plastic), hydrocarbons, fuels, chemicals, and waste byproducts. Chemical recycling is often presented as an environmental solution but primarily serves to benefit the plastic and fossil fuel industries. They promote chemical recycling by claiming that these materials can be used to manufacture new plastic products and as a way to manage plastic waste. But, in reality, it perpetuates the demand for disposable plastics and fossil fuels.

The conversion of plastic through pyrolysis, enzymatic breakdown, and other processes is an expensive, risky, toxic, and climate-damaging process. It does not improve recycling and is not an answer to our plastic pollution crisis. Instead, about 50% of the carbon content is released as greenhouse gases, contributing to climate change. The chemical conversion process also releases toxic chemicals, such as lead, arsenic, mercury, and benzene, into the environment.

HB 796 targets chemical recycling facilities attempting to operate in Maryland, which are mostly linked to the plastic and petrochemical industries. Under the bill, the following chemical conversion processes will be excluded from the definition of

“recycling” under Title 9, Subtitle 17 of the Environment Article (Office of Recycling): pyrolysis, hydrolysis, methanolysis, gasification, or enzymatic breakdown, or any similar chemical conversion processes. The bill will also prohibit the construction of chemical conversion facilities in Maryland.

While advanced recycling is touted as a silver bullet for waste reduction and economic growth, its benefits are not as clear-cut as proponents claim. The technology remains largely unproven at commercial scales and can entail significant energy and water use, sometimes producing hazardous byproducts that may undermine its environmental promises.

The speculative economic and job growth projections fall short of addressing the long-term environmental and public health risks that could arise from relying on such technologies.

The Natural Resources Defense Council’s report *What the Plastic Industry Isn’t Telling You About Chemical Recycling* from March of last year wrote that only eight chemical recycling facilities in the U.S. remain operational due to growing technical and financial difficulties. In 2024, three or four facilities closed, including Regenyx in Oregon, Fulcrum in Nevada, and New Hope in Texas, with Groveton in New Hampshire also appearing to have closed. Additionally, in 2025, a \$375 million federal grant to build a plant in Longview Texas was canceled, as DOE identified the project and others like it to be “not economically viable.” Other plants, like Brightmark in Indiana, have been relatively unsuccessful despite receiving federal subsidies.<sup>1</sup>

Pyrolysis, a method of chemical recycling that uses incineration, can be particularly dangerous. About 80% of chemical recycling facilities that are either proposed or operating in the U.S. use pyrolysis. However, this process recycles minimal plastic (only 0.1 - 6% of what enters the facility), instead primarily producing dirty fuels and hazardous waste. These byproducts are then burned for energy, releasing toxic chemicals and greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.<sup>2</sup> Any plastic that is actually recycled has toxic chemical additives that make it unsuitable for food-grade uses.<sup>3</sup>

Most operational chemical recycling plants are located in low-income communities and communities of color that already suffer from high levels of pollution and associated health problems like cancer and respiratory diseases. Some plants have experienced fires and explosions. About 16,000 chemical additives are used in making plastics. More than a quarter (4,200) of these chemicals are known to be harmful to human health and/or the environment, while others still have not yet been studied.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://environmentamerica.org/texas/center/articles/year-in-review-the-collapse-of-the-chemical-recycling-illusion/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nrdc.org/resources/chemical-recycling>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.plasticsmarkets.org/jsfcode/upload/wd\\_492/20211201120602\\_9\\_jsfwd\\_492\\_q2\\_1.pdf](https://www.plasticsmarkets.org/jsfcode/upload/wd_492/20211201120602_9_jsfwd_492_q2_1.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://plastchem-project.org/>

Rather than diverting investment to chemical processes that risk extending the life cycle of plastics, Maryland should prioritize reducing overall plastic consumption and strengthening traditional, proven recycling methods.

Maryland needs a sustainable waste management system that protects our environment and public health. Chemical recycling does not do this and should not be part of Maryland's future.

I respectfully urge a favorable report on HB 796.