

February 23, 2026

**HB796, Recycling-Prohibition on the Chemical Conversion of Plastic.**

**Position- FAVORABLE**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of HB796, Recycling – Prohibition on the Chemical Conversion of Plastic.

Protect Our Streams strongly supports this bill and respectfully requests a favorable report from the committee.

Pyrolysis, often marketed as "chemical recycling," presents significant environmental and health risks. The process is energy-intensive and can emit toxic pollutants—including dioxins, benzene, furans, and heavy metals—that threaten groundwater, rivers, and lakes. Research indicates that pyrolysis can release more greenhouse gases than the production of new plastics. (1)

Our primary concerns regarding pyrolysis include:

- **Air and Water Quality:** Pyrolysis can produce hazardous byproducts, including toxic ash (char) and wastewater. Incomplete reactions and contaminated feedstocks, such as PVC, can release hazardous substances that pose a threat to drinking water sources and public health through the emission of particulate matter and hazardous gases. (2)
- **Climate Change Impacts:** By releasing greenhouse gases, pyrolysis contributes to rising sea levels, increased ocean toxicity, and the destruction of marine life.
- **Human Health:** As noted by the Conservation Law Foundation, burning waste endangers public health and the environment, and is often financially unfeasible. (3)
- **Zoning and Environmental Justice:** It is inappropriate to site experimental chemical facilities near residential neighborhoods, protected buffers, wetlands, or drinking water sources. Such facilities should be restricted to heavy industrial zones far from population centers to ensure environmental justice.
- **Transparency and Oversight:** Toxic Release Inventory (TRI) data for these projects is often unavailable and can be difficult to obtain. Furthermore, the handling of flammable materials and hazardous waste raises serious concerns regarding transport safety, explosion risks, and the need for specialized Hazmat oversight in the event of an industrial accident or spill.
- **Waste Management:** Proposed projects involve transporting plastic pellets to pyrolysis facilities, venting by products to the atmosphere and collecting condensed liquid. This liquid can be transferred and stored in 55-gallon drums until they are

ultimately shipped to a third-party waste treatment facility, raising questions about transport safety and potential spills and the ultimate final disposition of the waste product.

- **Efficiency:** Research suggests that less than 6% of plastic processed via pyrolysis becomes new plastic, with the remainder often burned as fuel. Calling it "chemical recycling" perpetuates reliance on fossil fuels rather than encouraging genuine plastic reduction.

- **Resource Consumption:** Pyrolysis is an energy-intensive process and can draw significantly from municipal power grids and water systems, potentially increasing costs for residents.

While we understand the desire to find solutions for plastic waste, the negative consequences of pyrolysis warrant extreme caution. These experimental processes should not take place near Maryland's residents or critical water sources. We suggest these experiments be limited to existing manufacturing sites or brownfield locations outside of Maryland.

Given the potential for cumulative toxic impacts on our air, soil, health, and drinking water, we urge the committee to provide a favorable report on HB796.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sharon Boies  
Protect Our Streams

#### RESOURCES.

(1) NRDC: Chemical Recycling - <https://www.nrdc.org/resources/chemical-recycling>

(2) ProPublica: The Christian Science Monitor/Delusion of Advanced Chemical Plastic Recycling - <https://www.propublica.org/article/delusion-advanced-chemical-plastic-recycling-pyrolysis#:~:text=Half%20of%20all%20U.S.%20states%20have%20eased,gases%20th an%20making%20plastic%20from%20crude%20oil>

(3) Conservation Law Foundation: Burning Waste is a Bad Idea - <https://www.clf.org/blog/burning-waste-bad-idea/#:~:text=No%20Matter%20What%20You%20Call,plus%20heavy%20metals%20and%20dioxins>

From the Conservation Law Foundation-

"The reality is, these facilities hold no merit and are not financially feasible. Any burning of waste endangers our health, our climate, and our environment. CLF will track the Rhode Island commission's progress and will oppose any proposal to allow such a facility here or in any New England state. "