

I hope this written testimony finds you and your families safe and warm during this Covid-19 pandemic. Last year I provided my testimony in-person, therefore as a reminder to some of you, my name is Amy Genevieve Kozak and I am a third generation Baltimore City Resident. I am now also a Masters of Public Health student at the Milken Institute of George Washington University.

Of all the topics I could have chosen to present to my colleagues at George Washington in my Environmental Impacts on Public Health class, when asked by way of introducing myself, I offered up our trash incineration problem at both the BRESKO and Curtis Bay locations.

In the public health sector, it is well known that burning trash is one of the dirtiest forms of energy generation. Therefore, first and foremost, I respectfully request the Maryland General Assembly vote in favor of House Bill 332, "Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard [RPS] – Eligible Sources." Support of HB 332 will not require the closure of the existing trash incinerators in Maryland, however, HB 332 will remove subsidies that are paid by Maryland ratepayers. We are not just paying with our checkbooks, but also with poor health outcomes.

The pollution emitted from trash incinerators has detrimental health effects on the citizens of Maryland, and especially on the citizens of Baltimore. Wheelabrator emits dioxins which are a known cause of serious health consequences. A 2006 EPA analysis found that in 2000, incinerators were the fourth largest source of dioxins, a highly toxic

substance that the agency says can cause cancer. Dioxins are called persistent organic pollutants (POPs) because they persist in the environment for long periods of time.

Young people exposed to dioxins are impacted for the rest of their lives. Additionally, as humans are at the top of the food chain, we are not just full of dioxins from the air we breathe, but also from contaminated water, soil, and foods we consume. Poor health outcomes due to dioxins include neurotoxicity and below average intelligence, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, liver disease, and impaired reproductive as well as immune responses. “Furthermore, epidemiologic data suggest that there is little or no margin of exposure for humans, with respect to these developmental effects.¹”

On another serious note, I also want to draw attention to the benefits of reducing the waste stream without relying on incineration, by increasing the diversion of organic waste (food scraps, yard waste, and other plant-based materials). It is sometimes said that incineration is better for the climate than landfilling, because organic waste in landfills turns into methane, a potent greenhouse gas, which then leaks into the atmosphere. However, incinerating and landfilling organic waste are both the worst options for managing organic waste, and this idea ignores all of the better options for managing organic waste. By developing composting infrastructure, pursuing policies to reduce wasted food, and increasing donations of usable food that might have been discarded, the state can get organic waste out of both landfills and incinerators and into places that actually are beneficial for Marylanders. Applying compost to soil actually sequesters carbon dioxide, a valuable tool in fighting climate change. Organics typically are 25-40% of

the municipal waste stream, so getting them out of landfills and incinerators will significantly reduce the amount of waste that local governments need to handle. Simply collecting compostable materials could significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions and reduce the state's reliance on both landfills and incinerators.

For the reasons above, I request a FAVORABLE vote for HB 332 to remove trash from receiving Maryland ratepayer subsidies. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony and please stay warm and well through the remainder of this pandemic.

1. White, S. S., & Birnbaum, L. S. (2009). An overview of the effects of dioxins and dioxin-like compounds on vertebrates, as documented in human and ecological epidemiology. *Journal of environmental science and health. Part C, Environmental carcinogenesis & ecotoxicology reviews*, 27(4), 197–211. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10590500903310047>