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**SB 650**

February 24, 2021

**TO:** Members of the Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee

**FROM:** Natasha Mehu, Director of Government Relations

**RE:** SENATE BILL 650 – Workgroup to Evaluate the Establishment of a Regional Waste Disposal Facility

**POSITION: LETTER OF INFORMATION**

Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) submits the following **letter of information** on Senate Bill (SB) 650.

Senate Bill 650 would establish a work group of 10 persons representing local government (Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, and Howard counties, and Baltimore City), the recycling industry, waste diversion industry, the Northeast Maryland Waste Disposal Authority (NMWDA), and the Maryland Environmental Service (MES). The work group would develop a report that considers proposals for the siting and cost-sharing of a regional waste disposal facility, consolidating waste disposal needs, provides a commitment to phase out waste-to-energy and focuses on waste diversion to advance the principles of zero waste. The work group is to present its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly on or before December 1, 2021. The cost to support such an effort is anticipated to be minimal, however, the short turn-around time to produce a report would appear to be inadequate for such an important issue.

It is important to note that the City of Baltimore and the five (5) counties listed in the Bill are members of NMWDA, a regional coalition which looks at and assists its members with regional approaches to solid waste management, among other things. MES is a quasi-governmental (State) entity that provides expertise, services, and in some cases, operational services for solid waste management facilities with and for local governments, including waste diversion facilities.

In coordination with, and assistance from the NMWDA, Baltimore City Department of Public Works conducted and recently issued its “Less Waste Better Baltimore” operational plan that made recommendations on ways in which the City could expand recycling opportunities; invest in the development of waste diversion facilities, either solely or in partnership; encourage the private sector to do its part to reduce its waste stream through sustainable practices; and policy or legislative actions which could support these efforts (e.g. producer responsibility legislation, similar to bills introduced in this General Assembly session). As these more sustainable practices are developed and ramping up to their planned capacities, the City will be continuing its use of landfilling and waste-to-energy to manage its waste stream. The Less Waste Better Baltimore operational plan can be found at the following link:

<https://publicworks.baltimorecity.gov/lesswaste>.

The City of Baltimore has located within its borders, a waste-to-energy facility (BRESCO) and a medical waste incinerator, both of which received publicly and privately collected waste from around the region, and in the case of the medical waste incinerator, from out of state as well. The City also owns and operates the Quarantine Road Landfill (QRL) that it uses for disposal of waste it collects that does not go to the BRESCO facility for energy conversion, as well as privately collected waste that may be disposed of for a tipping fee. The City is in the process of developing expansion plans for QRL to extend the useful life of the facility. In addition, Baltimore City recently entered into a new 10-year contract with BRESCO to provide for the disposal of its waste as it works to develop waste diversion programs and facilities that will ultimately minimize the need to dispose of components of waste that can be recycled, reused, or repurposed.

We hope you find this **letter of information** on Senate Bill 650 helpful.