

## Testimony supporting HB161, The Northeast Maryland Waste Disposal Authority Sunset Act

EEE Senate Committee

March 23, 2023

Position: Support

I am Lauren Greenberger, representing Zero Waste Montgomery County. We support The Waste Disposal Authority Sunset Act simply on the grounds that it supports good governance and assures cost-effective use of our taxpayer dollars. The bill would assure the implementation of the STAR Commission's recommendation that each quasi-state agency in Maryland receive a sunset review every eight years, and affirms the special attention that the Commission paid to the Waste Disposal Authority.

The Waste Disposal Authority has operated without significant statutory change since its founding in 1980, more than four decades ago. The STAR Commission recommended that every quasi-governmental agency in Maryland undergo a sunset review every eight years in order to evaluate whether the agency still needs to exist, and highlighted the Waste Disposal Authority as an agency likely in need of such an evaluation. HB161 will provide such an evaluation for the Waste Disposal Authority to ensure that Maryland's quasi-governmental agencies are providing the best value for Maryland's local governments and residents.

Every year for the past 27 years the County has paid a membership fee to the Authority which has been well over \$380,000. In 2022, the Authority prepared a budget that requested over a million dollars total including consultant expenses and litigation fees. In 2023 their membership fee alone has been raised again to now \$568,000. These are significant fees for taxpayers and the programs that the Authority oversees, represent millions of dollars of taxpayer-funded programs.

Let's look at its duties as laid out in the Authority's own 2022 operational plan:

- 1. Monthly invoicing of Covanta, the County and Republic Services.*
- 2. Managing and enforcing all project contracts.*
- 3. Monitor project performance and environmental compliance.*
- 4. Inspecting the facility and Shady Grove Transfer Station to ensure the punch list repairs are being made in a timely fashion. Engaging HDR to monitor facility operations and maintain and recommend further improvements to the facility.*
- 5. Continue to monitor the electricity sales market and certify and market renewable energy credits as appropriate to maximize electricity revenues.*

Given that the Authority no longer holds bonds for capital projects, all the above functions could be handled by Maryland Environmental Services, which manages Montgomery County's recycling facility

and markets its recycling to private markets, bringing in \$32 million in FY 2022. Further, MES runs the operation of the County yard trim compost facility and also brings in revenue from the sale of its high quality Leafgro compost. MES has had an outstanding performance record at this facility throughout its history, is very transparent about its activities, and publicly reports on environmental concerns.

Based on these findings, and as recommended by the State Transparency and Accountability Review Commission, we fully support conducting an evaluation of this quasi-governmental agency

Thank you so much for your attention,

Lauren Greenberger

Zero Waste Montgomery County