



## TESTIMONY FOR HB0161

### Northeast Maryland Waste Disposal Authority – Evaluation and Termination of Bond Authority (Northeast Maryland Waste Disposal Authority Sunset Act)

**Bill Sponsor:** Delegate Korman

**Committee:** Education, Energy, and the Environment

**Organization Submitting:** Maryland Legislative Coalition

**Person Submitting:** Cecilia Plante, co-chair

**Position:** FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB0161 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of individuals and grassroots groups with members in every district in the state with well over 30,000 members.

HB161 would implement recommendations of the State Transparency and Accountability Reform Commission (“the Commission”), a bipartisan commission convened in 2021 to review and investigate the operations and structures of quasi-governmental agencies in Maryland. The Northeast Maryland Waste Disposal Authority (the “Waste Disposal Authority” or “Authority”), one of the quasi-governmental agencies the commission reviewed, duplicates the activities of other quasi-governmental agencies in everything but trash incineration.

The Commission recommended that all quasi-governmental agencies in Maryland receive a periodic sunset review, and specifically named the Waste Disposal Authority as a candidate for review. HB161 directs the Department of Legislative Services to conduct an independent review and report to the legislature recommendations. Simply as a matter of good governance and fiscal responsibility, the continued existence of the Waste Disposal Authority should be reviewed.

Another important reason to consider sunseting the Waste Disposal Authority is the Authority’s role in hampering the development of policies to divert organic waste from the waste stream. Organic waste is the primary source of methane emissions from Maryland’s waste and meaningful diversion of organic waste would be a significant step forward for both public health and achieving Maryland’s greenhouse gas reduction goals.

Montgomery County’s experience with the Waste Disposal Authority is illustrative of how the Authority impedes development of sustainable solid waste policies. When Montgomery County initially turned to the Waste Disposal Authority for technical support to develop an “Aiming for Zero Waste” plan, the Authority relied upon its pre-approved list of “on-call consultants,” while excluding from this list other nationally renowned experts in sustainable solid waste management planning. Instead, it sought engineering firms with a bias toward waste-to-energy and landfill solutions. The Authority’s chosen consultant for Montgomery County, HDR, was not well-versed in any newer technology solutions, and their report was not at all what the County was expecting.

To provide an alternative perspective to the Authority's consultants conclusions and recommendations, the County Executive subsequently procured the services of nationally recognized Zero Waste consultants to develop a report (at a fraction of the cost of the HDR report). The consultants reported that Montgomery County could significantly reduce its waste through a range of actions, including: reuse and repair programs; universal collection of recycling, organics and trash for all generators; deconstruction, construction, and demolition debris recycling requirements; establishment of a resource recovery park; and a comprehensive organics management strategy. This is an example of the different outcomes that can result from a jurisdiction's choice of consultants for developing a long-term strategic plan, and of the results that have come from using the Waste Disposal Authority's on-call consultants.

At the end of the day, it is beneficial for quasi-governmental agencies to be evaluated periodically and that this fulfills the STAR Commission's recommendations. We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.